Remembering Bing

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THE
INTERNATIONAL
CROSBY CIRCLE

"BING"
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BACK AGAIN !

BING: Official organ of THE INTERNATIONAL CROSBY CIRCLE.

Mar-July 1979 No. 53

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Dedicated to the imperishable memory of a great man and an entertainer beyond compare.

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(Latterly may be subject to minor change.

At long last BING is back with you again. And about time, with so much happening. Alas, my friends, it has been produced under very adverse circumstances. And a word of apology for the 'make do and mend' front cover. There would have been much further delay otherwise. No apology is offered for the contents of the magazine, however, for the usual thought and care has gone into carefully selecting the material Crosby admirers most like to read.

My unfortunate accident has resulted in a huge postage outlay, informing members all over the world of the mishap and the reason for the non-appearance of the April issue of BING. It is vital, therefore, that if subscriptions are now due (the April ones are 'lost'!) they are made without undue delay for our meagre resources do not even merit that description now!. And our usual leniency of two X's (2nd in red) is now withdrawn for the stated reasons. If you subs are due, and the X indicates this, failure to remit within a month at the latest will be deemed to have opted you out, lost interest, or for whatever reason, you no longer wish to be a member of this esteemed Circle.

An early word of 'thanks' for the incredible kindness of members to yours truly for get-well cards (what musical ingenuity in some of them!), tapes, cassettes, books, cheerful letters and the utmost goodwill. I cannot say it made it all worthwhile - but it helped enormously! And rather sadly I must report that rehabilitation is a very, very, painful process... Still, happy reading and listening!

EDITORIAL

IT'S good to be back! Its GREAT to be back...more than that, its a relief to be back! For its all been happening, as they are wont to say in these idiomatic days. Three months between issues - our normal timetable - is long enough in all conscience but when it comes to SIX it borders on the insupportable.

While your Editor was giving his - authentic - impression of a first-class layabout, it was all indeed happening. Bob Hope unveiling the plaque commemorating Bing at the London Palladium, Bing films at last in sequence (of a kind) on television - and - last but by no means least, startling new tracks on record!

The first two items were, without doubt, the result of determined pressure by members of this Circle. No doubt about that at all. It is satisfactory that these things came to pass. It is not so satisfactory, perhaps, that any pressure was needed.

As for the startling new tracks - well, they just have to be startling (we'll say nothing about controversial!) if only for the fact that they are comprised of the artistic workings of two widely separated decades! And while on this subject, we don't think enough has been made in the press and radio of the technical achievement of the double album we are now enjoying.

For those few who may still not know the reason for the inordinate delay in this issue of BING - there may be a few in outlying remote corners - the expression of "layabout" above is fully clarified immediately following this editorial comment.

But what is indisputable is that the loss (temporary) of BING was a very tangible thing - "Where's my BING?" "I know there's been a postal go-slow but..." "I don't seem to have No. 53, trust nothing is wrong...." And so on. And how heartening it was...even if it brought a lot of work in difficult circumstances. On the other hand it was the doctors' opinion that my consuming interest in BING and its readers was wonderful therapy for your Editor/Secretary. Truly the blessings of Bing are limitless.

And now—to get up to date !

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

I WASN'T PUSHED

..REG BRISTO...

MY WORST-EVER WINTER

Like most people, I can remember some really gruelling winters - far away winters dimly recalled from boyhood; 1940, 1947, 1963 were others more 'recent'. But the winter of 1978-79 - at least, the '79 part, has to be my worst for it catapulted me into hospital - and was I glad to get there! - for the first time in my life.

The date was Sunday, February 18; the time was 11.30am - just half-an-hour to midday - and thereby lay some of my undoing. For two months I had, like everyone else, been carefully stepping my way from the house on snowy and icy mornings, quite safely. Quite sure-footed. I must dispel any illusions that I am given to falling about! That was between 7.30 and 8 am each morning....this Sunday, it was all that much later and a bright day to boot!

On Sundays it is the custom of my wife and myself to visit our daughter for a couple of hours, a matter of 3 miles distant. And on this particular morning I was taking a pair of speakers to try out on my son-in-law's equipment as the connections were different from my own and I didn't want to go to the bother of unsoldering them only to re-solder if found to be satisfactory.

So it came about that around 11.30 I asked Mrs. B if she were ready? Yes came the reply, so I picked up this quite heavy box, opened the front door - and in a milli-second had sealed my fate to a long hospital stay and a painful rehabilitation! I just had no idea the front doorstep (tiled) was a sheet of pure ice. The weather didn't <u>feel</u> icy, but there had been a shower of rain, I later learned followed by a freak freeze. My foot went straight under me and I didn't so much fall as was smashed to the step. And in such a manner that my fall was across the edge of the step. It delivered what may best be described as an almighty karate chop to my femur - thigh....I also later learned that the fracture started less than an inch from the hip (mercifully missing the ball-and-socket apparatus), spiralled round twice and ended in a complete break and thorough displacement of the two ends of the bone shaft.

Instantly aware I had done something grievous, I endeavoured to call out to my wife not to come out; too late. Happily she was wearing a thickish suede coat and whilst promptly falling on her rear, did not hurt herself. I was trying to stifle groans and her immediate problem was how to get help, seeing that she couldn't stand up on the ice! So she crawled around me and managed to knock on the door of our neighbours. He came rushing out in response to her appeal to "Please help Reg..." - and he went full length, gashing his arm on some milk-bottles he smashed! It must have looked the funniest thing since the Keystone Cops. But, it only LOOKED that way.....

It was the time when ambulancemen were answering "emergency only"

and I came under that heading, I'm relieved to say. I first of all asked my good neighbour if he would pull me off the ice, but as soon as he touched me I knew it was out of the question. So, for the 25 mins it took the ambulance to arrive I lay on the ice - with blankets on top! Not a recommended 'sandwich'....and all that time I was wondering, with dread, as to how I could be handled without that mind-boggling agony? But those great ambulancemen had their analgesic device and their skillful knowledge of how to strap me up....Aware, as I say, that there was no question that I had broken a limb (tho' NOT aware of by how much) I was nevertheless rather naive. I felt I would have some plaster slapped on it and be home for lunch in a couple of hours. And continue working on the March BING, then in full flood....

How little I knew! I won't go into boring detail but within three days - days of heavy injections I'm glad to say - a doctor came to tell me that because of the nature of my fractures no operation (pinning, that is) would be possible or necessary but that it would be a "long job". I found out what a 'long job' might be when my wife came to visit that day for she had already been told it would take anything up to 16 weeks. So that was it. If you've broken a femur - considered, I am told, a major injury - you will know all about it - slings, splints, suspension, traction, immobility and so on.... If you haven't - pray you never do!

So I entered the long dark tunnel, as I thought. But happily, after the first 3 weeks and the necessity for pain-killers grew less and less, I found out what so many others have found out: that hospital life is an entirely different, fantasy, life and you have to put up with it because there is no alternative. Inevitably, it also produced some lighter, happier times, thanks I suppose to the camaradrie that develops in ward-mates. And while my accident can never be described as trivial, the subsequent cascade of letters I received contained in some cases stories of bravely-borne much more trying experiences than I was called upon to bear.

Lighter moments in the hospital? Indeed! Incidentally, so many readers interpreted my temporary address as Ward FOUR (poor old Reg, he must be bad. Can't spell four properly... actually, it was (and is) FRACTURE & ORTHOPAEDIC UNIT - A or B, hence FOUR A.. so when they addressed their letters Ward Four, the Royal Gwent being a vast hospital, it was many days before their letters eventually reached me!

> Soon I felt I had to do something about the mail that was accumulating, so I asked permission to have a portable typewriter; then I found some of the nights long and painful, so may I have a cassette deck with head-set please? Then I had a radio so that I could catch the day-by-day news....and it happened that the Ward TV was alongside my bed. So I suppose that it wqsn't surprising that when the consultant came to see me he surveyed the scene and asked (not maliciously) if there was anything else I needed to feel at home - and were they (the medical staff) in the way? When I attempted to apologise for the seeming 'take-over' I was assured they were delighted - it was excellent therapy....

MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE AT THIS TIME I WANT TO THANK ALL THOSE PEOPLE WHO SENT ME LETTERS, WONDERFUL LETTERS, CARDS, AND TAPES. ENCOURAGING LETTERS, HUMOROUS CARDS! ENTERTAINING TAPES..HOW MUCH THEY WERE APPRECIATED IN DARK AND DIFFICULT DAYS IS HARD FOR ME TO ADEQUATELY EXPRESS. When the mail began to roll in the impression seemed to gain ground that I was some sort of celebrity. I quickly scotched that view and explained that I merely had some wonderful friends. The best friends in the world - Crosby friends. Needless t say, my connection with the Circle created tremendous interest

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There came the morning when I was quietly - in order not to disturb others or to foist my tastes on them - playing a Bing tape. "Is that Bing?" called the chap opposite me. On being told it was - "Turn it up then Reg, let's all hear old Bing..." It was quite a moving experience to soon have the entire ward, despite ailments, singing BLUE OF THE NIGHT, HOME ON THE RANGE, OL' BLACK JOE, SWINGING ON A STAR and so many other favourites.

Again, I wasn't really surprised at the vast knowledge of Bing and his family that was exhibited. It came home to me most vividly confirmation of what I have often said in public: that the whole world seems to be a Bing Crosby fan club, without necessarily wanting to belong to any club or Circle.

Nurses would come and stand by the bed and chat most knowingly of Dixie Lee, Gary, Bob Hope and the Road films; recalling in one case of how they had been at the Stage Door Canteen in 1944 when Bing sang there.....of what records they had and treasured.... "We all love HOLIDAY INN in our house - they cannot show it often enough for us...." "Father O'Malley - wasn't Bing wonderful in those priest films!" "My father has a lot of Bing 78's - and won't let anyone of us touch 'em..." "I bet you haven't got a record of Bing singing BLUE PRELUDE!"..... and perhaps most often: "How awful that Bing had to die....but surely, what a lovely way he died." And, perhaps not surprisingly, "Ol' Bing will never die really...."

So it came about that Bing tracks became a regular daily treat for the whole ward. Should I be a shade late in operating the deck there would be, inevitably, the query: "No Bing this morning Reg? Hurry up son!"

As I've said, the blessings of Bing are limitless. Here was further, tangible, proof. And how it liggtened tedious, or otherwise, tedious and painful days.

I tremble to mention individuals for fear of my memory letting someone slip. All communications were warmly welcome and appreciated, yet I feel I must particularly single out ARNOLD BAKER of N. Ireland who took the trouble (must have taken hours and hours) to specially record no less than 5 C90 cassettes for my entertainment. Not only of Bing but of almost every conceivable form of light entertainment; Barrow Hollowday, of Wick, Littlehampton, Jim Reilly of Walthamstow, who also went miles out of his way to come and see me in the Royal Gwent Hospital. I am grateful too

to good friend FRANK MURPHY up in the North East not only for words of cheer but also for publicising my plight in his estimable BING PICTORIAL. Also I had the opportunity of hearing one of the programmes Frank gives over the hospital network in Newcastle - giving up his Saturday mornings for this laudable effort. His style is so entertaining its a great pity he cannot command a wider audience.

So the weeks went by and the official forecast of a 'long job' ran to twelve weeks hospitalisation. Ten of these were spent in bed under traction; the final two in a wheelchair with minimum daily 'walks' on a 'frame' of about six yards. An exercise, by the way, which exhausted me!

I was returned home by ambulance on May 12 and once again my colossal naivete came into play. I foolishly thought all was over bar the shouting; that a week or so would see me back to normal and in full cry! How stupid I was for as I write, four weeks later, I am still trying to restore some strength to wasted muscles, both good and 'bad' leg...and a mighty painful process it is proving. At first the crutches struck true terror into me; terror that I was going to fall again and land back in that ward... I found myself desperately wanting to return to bed when I had been up an hour....on Tuesdays and Thursdays I have to return to the Royal Gwent for therapy, and this proves an exhausting event twice a week.

Still, it was great to be home...in familiar surroundings. Many of our less fortunate members know thefeeling well...with the very willing co-operation of my wife, however, I found I could take my place at the typewriter, or even the recorders and players....soon I was able to face the task of wading through three months' backlog of mail.....and most importantly, to pick up the threads of the March BING issue, so nearly complete when I fell....Which brings us almost up-to-date..... What I am going to do NEXT winter I just don't know. I have a phobia about ice it is going to be very, very difficult to overcome. But that is a problem that can be put away for a month or two...

Now, as this issue reaches you, I trust that naivete apart, I have made progress towards walking normally again and that the trauma of Winter '79 is fading into memory....

It didn't really take a nasty accident with its attendant hospital stay to make me aware of what Angels nurses (and domestic staff) really are, but it certainly makes the impression indelible. The work-to-rule, emergencies only, and other industrial actions were taking place while I was 'in' and I have a vivid recollection of the orderlies weeping as their stewards called for a 'token' stoppage and they were prevented from serving tea to their 'patients'. It was a moving moment amongst many..... BING is not perhaps the journal to concern itself unduly with economic conditions (except possibly the price of records!) but we might well ponder on the Franckenstein of a society we have built which pays colossal rewards to someone successfully knocking a little white

ball around a golf links; 'superstars' (sic) of pop whose vocal talents are largely farcical; workers in a profitable industry such as the car manufacturing plus a hundred more other anomalies and yet the dedicated women who undertake the work - no, the vocation, of nursing the sick and the injured are paid a pittance little above subsistence level. And, into the bargain, are required to submit to a discipline and regime that is almost military in its severity.

Perhaps some light was shed on this problem when, on leaving the hospital, I asked the Sister, possibly rhetorically: "How does one thank such dedicated staff...?"

And her reply: "To see you going home well and on the way to complete recovery is thanks enough..."

You will understand how cheering and gratifying it was for me to receive letters as follows:

Dear Reg: I just had a note from Leslie Gaylor telling me of your accident and the fact that you will be in hospital for some time. How perfectly dreadful.

Hospital stays take a lot of patience, but it is necessary if one wishes to heal properly - and that you must do.

So take care, Reg. Catch up on your reading, look at the telly a lot, and get lots of rest. We want you back in A-1 shape as soon as possible.

Best wishes,

March 13, 1979 KATHRYN (CROSBY)

Dear Reg: Basil Grillo and I were so unhappy to hear of your injuries due to an ice-fall, and we hasten to send our best wishes for a speedy recovery.

Warmest regards,
NANCY BRIGGS
Sec'y to Basil Grillo

March 13, 1979

And it would be unforgivable of me not to mention, also, that my good Dutch friend, FRANS VAN DER KOLFF in Amsterdam, sent me a most unusual cassette in that it consisted of Bing records played on various European radio stations, complete with the foreign language introductions! The tape vividly illustrates that Crosby records still crop up all over the world. Perhaps it is STILL true that the loved voice IS heard somewhere all over the world every minute of the 24 hours of the day..... the way it undoubtedly used to be...

Possibly I have dwelt too long on my accident; but many, many members have asked to hear the full story. And I mustm't forget the wag who artlessly enquired: "What happened to the loudspeakers you were carrying?" Well, they literally tobeganned down the garden path and crunched into the hedge. And to this day I haven't yet had the heart to look at any possible damage. Without them, I might have been able to use my arms to save myself to a large extent.

THE BIG BROADCAST

THE FILM!

There have, of course, been thousands of big broadcasts since Marconi first squeaked sounds across the air, instituting in the process the world's greatest communications medium. But to Crosby fans those three words - THE BIG BROADCAST - mean that film of 1932, all of 47 years ago and remembered by thousands, if not millions as the film that first projected the magical name, voice, and personality of the man destined to be Entertainer of the Century.

Assuredly many of us had seen KING OF JAZZ a couple of years earlier; we might even have seen the odd Mack Sennett 'short' but it would be a remarkable man or woman (for that matter) who would claim to have been completely aware of Bing in those productions. Noted him, perhaps, as an engaging personality performing with the Rhythm Boys....but not in any way appreciating fully just how far that young man would go.

The records of the songs featured in that BIG BROADCAST OF 1932 had been released in the UK long before the film reached here - principally, of course, PLEASE and HERE LIES LOVE though his records with the Mills Brothers had also made a stir. And suddenly, it seemed, everyone was talking about Bing Crosby! That beautiful, masculine voice, singing tremendously melodic songs with an easy, engaging air. Bending notes, breaking notes, even as someone once said, putting the 'sob of the Italian tenors' into a popular song! Thus we were impatiently awaiting the chance to see this new singing phenomenon.

Perhaps the true irony was that in those days few families had a radio. Not radio, WIRELESS was what it was always called here in Britain. Remember the late '40's and the early '50's when only a family here and there boasted a television set? That's how it was around 1931-32 but with wireless sets. They were, indeed, only just emerging from the cats-whisker/crystal stage. AMATEUR WIRELESS and WIRELESS WORLD, two contemporary publications, offered 'blue-prints' whereby a wireless set could be built up in do-it-yourself style for a pound or two. You soldered it altogether, put in the valves (transistors!), connected up the battery, the accumulator and the grid bias (whatever THAT was), strung up a mighty aerial down the length of the garden, switched on - and hoped for the best!

Yet within the next half dozen years we were destined to see the rapid development of the superhet sets; then marvel of marvels, the moving coil speaker, handsome furniture-style cabinets...but we still played our precious 78rpm records with steel needles! Steel needles on shellac, forsooth. Was there ever a more barbarous method? Yet some of those 78s are still being played today....

Exciting days; the miracle (or another of 'em!) was that Bing sold so many records in those early days for the truth is gramophones were almost as scarce as wirelesses. We just didn't look forward to the day when people would walk around with radios little bigger than a box of matches; that households would boast two, three, four or more radios....as for television - although it did start around 1936 in Britain, it was more like anticipating H.G.WELLS 'WAR OF THE WORLDS!

All of which is an unintentioned meandering approach to the real purpose of the heading: and that is the precis which the NATIONAL FILM THEATRE prepared for its screening of this epic film. It was exceptionally accurate and well worth repeating here for the benefit of so

many of our members who have come under the Crosby magic long after those days of the early 30's, those heady days despite the economic ills which were in so many ways far worse than they are today. And if that takes some believing, it was so. There were, for example, three MILLION unemployed....Howver, to the NFT's programme, and our grateful acknowledgements to the compiler and the NFT:

THE BIG BROADCAST

Director:	Frank Tuttle
Script:	George Marion, Snr.
From the play:	WILD WAVES by William Ford Manley
Photography:	George Folsey.

CAST:

Bing.....	Bing Crosby
Leslie McWhinney.....	Stuart Erwin
Anita Rogers.....	Leila Hyams
Mona Lowe.....	Sharon Lynne
Mr. Burns.....	George N. Burns
Reception Clerk.....	Gracie Allen
Mr. Clapsaddle.....	George Barbier
Telephone operators.....	Major, Sharp & Minor
Announcer.....	Ralph Robertson
Office boy.....	Spec O'Donnell

Radio Stars include: Donald Novis, The Mills Brothers, The Boswell Sisters; Arthur Tracey, Kate Smith, Vincent Lopez & his Orchestra, Cab Calloway and his Orchestra.

1932 U.S.A. Paramount 78 mins.

Bing's first CBS broadcast was on September 6, 1931, and almost overnight his name was a household word. Within four weeks the show had a sponsor (Cremo Cigars) and Bing had a contract for twenty weeks at NYC's (New York City's) Paramount Theatre, which had totally rejected him a few years before. After the first ten weeks he was raised from $2500 a week to $4000.

A not unimportant ingredient of his sudden radio success was the song he chose for his "signature": WHERE THE BLUE OF THE NIGHT MEETS THE GOLD OF THE DAY, which, published late in 1931, had not caught on until Bing took it up. He slightly changed Roy Turk's words (and is officially listed by ASCAP as one of the song's authors). The revised lyrics, and Fred E. Ahlert's music, exactly suited Bing's crooning style.

While Bing was appearing on the Paramount Theatre stage one of his shorts for Sennett, ONE MORE CHANCE, played Broadway with Gloria Swanson's TONIGHT OR NEVER, and, since Crosby now had star-status, VARIETY reviewed it, and said: 'Crosby displays a capital comedy sense, plays with assurance and certainty. Short is worth minor featuring in view of air popularity'.

Armed with such reviews Everett opened negotiations with Paramount Pictures and ended up with a contract for $300,000 for five pictures over a three-year period.

The first, THE BIG BROADCAST, had a script based on the play WILD WAVES, which dealt with a radio singer who had an inferiority complex. A number of speciality acts from radio were shot in NYC and spliced into that film.

Bing had no illusions about himself as an actor. 'If I'm going to get

by in pictures,' he said, 'its going to be as a singer, with about as much acting as you could expect from a guy standing in front of a microphone.'

THE BIG BROADCAST premiered in NYC's Paramount Theatre (14.10.32) and Bing's notices were better than good. Said the NY DAILY MIRROR: 'Crosby hints at great possibilities as a film player. No radio star ever has photographed better, or faced the cameras with greater poise and assurance than the pleasing Bing.' And the NY AMERICAN: 'Bing Crosby is the star, make no mistake about it. The BLUE OF THE NIGHT boy is a picture personality, as he demonstrated in his two-reelers. He has a camera face and a camera presence. Always at ease, he troupes like a veteran'.

When his CBS contract ended that radio network offered him $2000 a week to sing for Chesterfield cigareetes. Since that series didn't begin until after the New Year, Everett arranged for some personal appearances in NYC in the interim. The first was at the Capitol Theatre and there, on December 2, 1932, Crosby made a life-long friend: a vaudeville monologist named Bob Hope.

In March 1933 Crosby returned to Hollywood for the second movie under the Paramount contract; COLLEGE HUMOUR. It had him be a singing professor of drama.

from an article in FILMS IN REVIEW June/July 1968
by Alvin Marill.

> Thus the critics, for once, spotted a 'winner' immediately. And that, briefly, is how Bing's film career really started. Exciting days....

What a strange thing it is that THE BIG BROADCAST has never, so far as we know, never been shewn on television in this country, though that presupposes that the film is available. Yet the National Film Theatre not only had it, but had an "excellent copy" of it.

And what of the other people concerned in this, for us, historic production? No doubt our film people know about, and what happened subsequently to the technical people of the film. Stuart Erwin endured for years in Hollywood as one of those actors instantly recognisable and appearing in scores of films, always playing a sound part. George N. Burns is of course the same George Burns so high & successful today - in his eighties! His famous wife, the 'daffy' Gracie has long been dead. Arthur Tracey, was better known as The Street Singer with perhaps his most famous song MARTA. Donald Novis was an equally attractive singer but seems to have passed from the scene compararively quickly. Cab Calloway was very famous at the time as the Hi-de-Hi bandleader, with a good snappy band though he later turned to acting and among his performances he was in a successful revival of PORGY & BESS. Vincent Lopez had a smoother type of dance band and also carried on a successful career. The Mills Brothers, incredibly, are still highly successful to this very day though they suffered various misfortunes; one of the brothers John died in the mid-30's. This shattered the Brothers but their father stepped into the breach for several years. When he passed away they carried on as a trio. Connie Boswell too continued with a highly successful career both with her two sisters and as a soloist, though all are dead now. And Kate Smith, who like all of these artists, were among what might be termed the 'first generation' of really great radio artists continued with a highly succ-

essful singing career - she was the lady of generous proportions whose big first song was WHEN THE MOON COMES OVER THE MOUNTAIN.

This was a film that set out to show what went on behind the scenes of the new media, radio, in much the same way as later musicals showed what went on "behind the scenes" and later still, behind television.

THE WORLD OF BIG BANDS: THE SWEET AND SWINGING YEARS: is the name of a very interesting book, written by one ARTHUR JACKSON (The Alden Press for David and Charles Ltd., Brunel House, Newton Abbott, Devon - 1977 - £4.95p. And, of course, it is a most interesting book containing several references to Bing - but we are not recommending you necessarily rush to buy it on that account. But we do feel you will be interested in the following extract from the INTRODUCTION to the book:

> "Bands of all types...were predominant in hotels, ballrooms, restaurants, night clubs, films and on stage, radio and records. Particularly on records! Incredible though it may seem in the present musical climate, there was a time when swing bands dominated the charts. In July 1940, for instance, the USA TOP TEN consisted of three records by Glenn Miller, two by Tommy Dorsey and one each from the bands of Jimmy Dorsey, Kay Kyser, Charlie Barnett and Mitchell Ayres (the odd one out was by Bing Crosby, who at that time had his own permanent spot reserved in the Top Ten anyway....."

Those were indeed the days, my friends !

SCOTTISH MEMBERS IN PARTICULAR WILL KNOW THAT THE GPO CERTAINLY BROKE NEW AND INTERESTING GROUND WHEN IT ISSUED AEROGRAMS (air-mail letter forms) TO COMMEMORATE THE PROFESSIONAL GOLF CHAMPIONSHIPS AT ST. ANDREWS IN APRIL-MAY, FOR THEY CONTAINED QUITE ROUGH BUT INSTANTLY IDENTIFIABLE SKETCHES OF BING AND BOB HOPE IN GOLFING GEAR. THEY WERE NOT, ALAS, ON SALE IN THE REST OF BRITAIN. I'M DELIGHTED SOME SCOTTISH MEMBERS WERE QUICK TO SEND ME SOME SAMPLES.

FOR THOSE WHO WOULD LIKE THIS NOVEL PIECE OF CROSBYANA THE BLANK FORMS CAN BE OBTAINED FROM THE PHILATELIC BUREAU., GPO, EDINBURGH AT THE FACE VALUE (10½p); THEY CAN ALSO BE OBTAINED FROM CAMEO STAMPS, THE STRAND, LONDON, W.C. AT 50p - which sounds a bit of a non-bargain! I'm grateful for this information to Jim Turner, 8 Cell Farm Avenue, Old Windsor, Berks. And Jim, incidentally, is one of those members forever willing to research the NFT archives for those Bing films we do NOT see on BBC. Like MISSISSIPPI, for instance!

Of course, if you have Scottish friends and relatives it will be much easier to obtain the aerograms - unless they have really taken Wembley, 3-1, May 26th to heart.....

CLICK WITH BERT BISHOP ********************

...and keeping track is meant literally this time, for BERT feels (and we agree) that the entirely unique album he deals with firstly merits a track by track analysis. Seems too that Bert enjoyed - we think! - a personal visit from producer Ken Barnes himself.

"IS THIS what you review my records on?" With undeniable admonishment from Ken Barnes 'tut-tutted' at the indiscriminate set-up that passes for my stereo system. Never one to worry too much about the mechanics of listening to the voice of Bing Crosby, I suppose the fact that my two speakers were concealed behind cases of records and stacks of sheet music were an indication that he probably had a point. Certainly he was getting back at me for just a few criticisms along the way - especially SLEIGH RIDE the arrangement of which is definitely NOT a happy meeting ground! And no doubt Ken's apprehensions were not allayed by the thought that I would shortly be reviewing:

SONGS OF A LIFETIME: BING CROSBY Philips 6641 923 Stereo UK £6.99p

Just the day before Ken had called me on the 'phone to suggest he brought over the test pressings of the new double album - still a month away from release. Ken was clearly very happy with the final pressings and was just itching to play them to any Crosby addict who was available, particularly perhaps in view of much adverse advance criticism that had been flying around. I will freely admit that I was 'anxious' as to what was going to happen to these Bing and Buddy Cole tracks myself.

Well, as I live almost the closest of any ICC member it happened to be me he rang and I don't know who was the most excited, but I would suggest it was me!

> It was not only a thrill to hear these new tracks, and some of the as yet unissued ones which Ken brought over on cassette but it was also a very pleasant opportunity to hear a good deal of the background to the making of the recordings. Quite a fascinating story; and not only for facts and figures.

I think most would agree that the sleeve falls considerably short of what we had hoped for - the portrait of Bing is a very indifferent likeness - but it is the thirty-six songs that are what it is all about, and as far as I am concerned my first hearing on that day dispelled any misgivings that had lurked, despite Ken's continual assurance that Bing would be presented in the best possible light and with some great arrangements to make the album a product that would go on to sell a million. Like the man said: DON'T KNOCK IT UNTIL YOU'VE TRIED IT!

Now we have the album on general release and, as is the usual custom for these columns my personal review of each track of the new Bing album is presented for readers to mull over, agree with - or disagree with. For as I have stressed before I hope to be always discriminate in my listening - if not with my hi-fi equipment!

STRAIGHT DOWN THE MIDDLE: The album commences with the original 1957 recording that Bing made with the Buddy Cole Orchestra. To enable it to blend in with the standard of musical reproduction on this album there is an added combo on the side, some balancing up in the violin section, and a stereophonic golf-ball that whips across the room from speaker to speaker as Bing tees off on this great collection. The track itself is 27 seconds shorter than before, having had that amount of orchestral break lopped in a worthwhile approach to making this album almost continuously vocal. Which is what we want to hear.

TRY A LITTLE TENDERNESS: 'This maudlin piece of rubbish', writes Michael Brooks in the sleeve note of the recent CBS release of Bing's 1933 recordings. Mawkish it certainly is, but it is hardly rubbish! Both the verse and the chorus technically are beyond reproach and the ballad carries its romantic message quite conversationally and without repetition. In any case, Bing eschews any hint of foolish extravagance in a straight, no-nonsense performance that is only faintly brushed with Crosby mannerisms. They are to come, of course: the flexed vowels, broken notes and other equally harmonious deviations that are the essence of his style. The added strings and brass are kept, like the original piano accompaniment, fairly low key, though some neat infilling by the orchestra maintains the sentimental mood essential to the character of the song.

YES SIR, THAT'S MY BABY: Popular with the radio 'disc-jockeys' this razzamatazz recording is an infectious bauble that, as a song, must rate as the most trivial in the collection. But it is a cheerful earful that appeals, apparently, to the sophist and the more easily pleased among us. No doubt this is entirely due to the liberties that Bing takes with the original lyric, though one mustn't overlook the musical contribution as the orchestra pads it out with a carefully faked flippancy that falls easily on the ear

MOONGLOW and Theme from PICNIC: Not one of the more singable songs; its presence on the album might be considered a doubtful enhancement. It does introduce some balance in tempo and style and a certain 'title' weight. But clearly, it is not a great Bing vocal. The orchestral arrangement is somewhat indeterminate, leap-frogging Bing to produce an effect that is at once ethereal and nite-spot indigo more than likely pre-determined by the cocktail confinement of the original backing.

YOU'RE THE TOP: Now we are in high class company with this Cole Porter song of long-time Bing association (two film versions). Though just a little subdued, Bing makes this most famous of all 'comparison' songs refreshingly satisfying to listen to. An uplifting track that is a near-perfect blend of all the talent concerned with its production; and tho' Bing sings I HATE PARADING MY SERENADING I'm sure that the rest of us are more than happy

that he did so, especially with recordings of this calibre.

DON'T BLAME ME: A beamy ballad on which Bing is in very fine voice indeed. Deceptively so, for Bing employs his rubato technique of departing from the metronomic rhythm so that one is almost unaware that he is doing it. Perhaps 'technique' is not the right word here, for Bing's phrasing - lingering or hurrying over the melody line - is the natural musical feeling that he has always had, and almost always used, in the delivery of a song. As with all of the tracks he is well projected so that the added accompaniment to the Quartet is entirely suitable; rounding up the backing to be boldly unobtrusive.

NICE WORK IF YOU CAN GET IT: A bouncy version of the 1937 Gershwin film song penned for Fred Astaire in DAMSEL IN DISTRESS. This is Bing the jazz vocalist as opposed to Bing the balladeer, taking the song purely as a vehicle for spontaneous self-indulgence, complete with conversational ad lib observations. The accompaniment is equally expressive, transporting us along with verve and rhythm. Try walking away from this one without whistling or singing it for the next couple of hours!

I GUESS I'LL H'VE TO CHANGE MY PLAN: Bing, so it is written, dubbed himself 'The Groaner' and taking a song or two through the years one can go along quite easily with that self-effacing description of the Crosby delivery. The penultimate track on Side One fairly qualifies for that affectionate appellation. One feels very comfortable with this track to the point of being able to turn to anyone you may be listening with and, dispensing with any superlatives, saying: 'Isn't that a nice track?' - a rhetorical queston that begs only the affirmative answer. Here again the updated accompaniment boosts the overall presentation, and with the strings laid note-for-note over Buddy Cole's pipe organ a gratifying modernity is achieved without losing sight of the original arrangements.

LOVE IS THE SWEETEST THING: Ray Noble was a man of great taste in all that he did. And this is particularly true of his own compositions, such as this one. Bing sings it with an almost circumspect reverence, even concluding with a no risk low note rather than reaching up for a 'G' as one might have expected. Such servility for the first side closer is not totally out of keeping with the composition, for when Noble presented it to his publisher that worthy commented: "What's this? A rewrite of 'God save the King?" Be that as it may, the new recording is as tasteful as the man who wrote the song, and every bit as agreeable to listen to.

TRUE LOVE: The original release, with Grace Kelly of course, will always remain a great record. It has an unshakeable musical charm that conjures idyllic images of their romantic screenplay honeymoon aboard their yacht, the TRUE LOVE, and deservedly it became a 'million-seller'. However, looking deeper than the evocative appeal, this version is somewhat superior by virtue of the marvellous true duet performed by Bing and Rosie Clooney. Bing takes it much more serenely and sentimentally sotto voce. The harmonising is superb with Rosemary matching Bing in splendid perfection.

The mainly strings accompaniment also blends in beautiful harmony, rising and falling in elegant, melodic phrases. A super-

lative performance from all the participants.

AIN'T MISBEHAVIN' : A pacey track that is traditionally conventional both vocally and in the arrangement. Bing 'ad libs' with a nod to Rosemary Clooney, thus making this lively number suitably placed to its predecessor.

MISTY: A polished introduction sets the scene for this graceful song, with its moody, confessional theme of disorientated love. When related to up-tempo tunes like the foregoing one can only continue to marvel at Bing's remarkable versatility and the estimable self-possession that he brings to tunes of this genre.

IT'S ALRIGHT WITH ME: The title does not mirror my opinion on this one. For a start, the plethora of 'faces' tends to aggravate - which is unusual for a Cole Porter song - and although the introductory accompaniment, and later support, reminds me of the exciting, electric, introduction that Pete Moore brought to HEAT WAVE on the show songs LP, it is less effective here because the lyric doesn't warrant a musical prophecy of impending hawoc of ANY kind. IT'S THE WRONG SONG IN THE WRONG STYLE sings Bing: he could be right.

YOURS: A Bosa Nova beat suits this number very well, and with Bing airing his I[illegible]in-American dialect in a repeat chorus - reminiscent of BINGO VIEJO and early Victor 78s that gave titles in English and Spanish - a further change in pace and style is affected for faithful aficionados AND the non-partisan. Methinks neither group would be totally happy with an entire album in this vein - unless you happen to be Reg Bristo or addicted to siestas and sombreros, etc.

I'VE GROWN ACCUSTOMED TO HER FACE: Professor Higgins would wince at Bing's fully American 'toon' ('she whistles night and noon') and no doubt shake his head in dismay at the speed with which Bing rather casually dispenses with what is, really, a heartfelt ballad of considerable substance. I am equally certain that this critique will arouse more passion that you'll find in THIS recording. But, fair do's; consider some of the superlative tracks on this album which, by comparison, highlight the possibilities and inadequacies of others.

YOU'RE SENSATIONAL: The style of delivery clearly having been set by his male co-star in HIGH SOCIETY (film), Bing is quite happy to go along with it and give us a fairly similar production - and not even tongue-in-cheek. Hence, a vigorous performance from Mr. C. which has a strong appeal, vocally and instrumentally.

SO RARE: Much more Bing-like is his rendition in this slightly lesser known 'song of a lifetime'. Lightly persuasive though undemanding in attention, it makes for very easy listening. A forgettable tune that Bing makes that much easier to remember.

MANHATTAN: Side two closes with a standout performance that projects the Crosby style to perfection. Strong delivery blending with natural musical flair. One could ask for nothing more of this track with the wish that no others fell short of it.

KEEPIN' OUT OF MISCHIEF NOW: What a grand start to the second half of the programme! Bing, Buddy, Pete Moore and Orchestra all

performing at the peak of their musical bravura. Of course, when you're looking over your should at the late, great, 'Fats' there's no excuse for anything less.

UNCHAINED MELODY: In a way unexpectedly, this rather 'grand' song suits Bing very well indeed. Certainly it is a fine performance to which he brings an impressive earnestness and self-restraint. No flippant deviation to mar the mannered elegance of his strong, baritone, delivery; and this is suitably echoed by an imaginative and expressive accompaniment. Would that Bing had made more recordings of this calibre.

> It could be said that the next two tracks are a complete encapsulation of Crosby - certainly in the period of his career represented on these records.

ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT: This has never been sung better, not even by Bing, for this version definitely has the edge on the 1956 track cut with Joseph Lilley. Here Bing has dropped a half-tone and given us a much more sensitive reading of the refrain. Its a beautiful recording that lacks only the verse to make it the 'compleat' Bing ballad.

I CAN'T GET STARTED: In total contrast here's the maestro rising to the surface, taking the lure of this number in a jazz style that he has made his very own. Just when one thinks that his extravagant ramblings MUST leave him high and dry there he is, right back in the melody without missing a beat. Its more than an art - its almost a science!

A couple of conversational comments have been omitted from the original tape, and careful listening will reveal this by the sudden absence of Buddy Cole's piano playing. The two lines are: 'Hanging on to a Thunderbird' and 'or is that a dirty word?'; and for those not in possession of the original tapings an entertaining diversion awaits by the location of the two lines. The orchestra is well arranged and featured on both of these tracks. On the second, Kenny Baker, famed British trumpet-player, ventured to remark at the conclusion of the accompaniment recording: "Well, I started off like Berigan but ended up doing a Louis!" With his many years of experience Mr. Baker has enough talent of his own not to need to imagine that he is emulating others. More please!

I WISH YOU LOVE: This falls a little short of being encompassed within the album's title. Certainly the tune is exceedingly pleasant but the lyric lacks any meaningful depth. Many of the lyrical refrains from song 'standards' do not bear too close an examination, I suppose. But when Bing lends his voice to them one tends to overlook their shortcomings and just enjoy the musical excursion. This track is a prime example.

PLEASE DON'T TALK ABOUT ME WHEN I'M GONE: A much bolder and more modern backing keeps this track driving along, giving the overall impression that Bing is being forced into a corner. However, since he laid down his contribution on tape long before Pete Moore surrounded him with this sound, any confinement must be attributed to Buddy Cole's restricting tempo. All in all, if you like the Bregman album this is for you.

HOW LONG HAS THIS BEEN GOING ON? As with not a few 'brothers Gershwin' tunes, this one is not the easy of songs to sing. Its full of subtle musical phrases that are not instantly obvious to read. Harry Lillis seems to have no trouble at all and delivers the goods just as George and Ira undoubtedly intended. Meanwhile, Pete provides every support with just a light musical embrace, proving that good taste is almost always unobtrusive.

WAY DOWN YONDER IN NEW ORLEANS : In the chronological first of his three recordings of this old time southern swinger, part composed by the well-remembered Turner Layton , Bing sets his own standard that has subsequently proved to be unassailable to any great degree. Each of the three is likeable in its own way and now, in this topsy-turvy situation, the first has emerged as good as they have since come.

YOU'LL NEVER KNOW: Sheer bliss! The 'hit' song from HELLO, 'FRISCO, HELLO has always been a great personal favourite of mine since I first heard Alice Faye take it to the top. Its been a very popular song with singers ever since and Bing's version, finally rectifying an outstanding omission in his commercial releases, can only continue to enhance its standing, much of which is also due to a rist-rate accompariment artistically arranged.

THE LADY IS A TRAMP: A very volatile and scintillating arrangement backs up an equally exhilarating performance from Bing as he picks up the PAL J EY No. 1 tune (unless you rate BEWTICHED, BOTHERED & BEWILDERED even better) by the scruff, shakes out the clan-type colloquiallisms and, with a nod to 'The Twig' puts his stamp on yet another Rodgers & Hart show tune with stylish nonchalance. Great stuff!

I'VE GOT A CRUSH ON YOU: This is exactly the kind of number that Bing needs to take over the cocktail party trade - a sizeable slice of the musical market. Not that he has changed his style here, but the new accompaniment makes it more universal and takes it beyond the parochial confines of the devotee trade. Duncan Lamont on tenor saxophone and Jud Proctor, guitar, are prominent to good effect.

THEY DIDN'T BELIEVE ME : Originally with Buddy Cole on pipe organ this tune is transformed beyond all bounds by the added piano and strings. Taken out of context of its original showcase, THE GIRL FROM UTAH, bearing in mind that it was a 1914 show, the lyric becomes rather trite, and despite Bing's sublimity there was hardly enough to sustain an interest on just the vocal. Happily the situation is now greatly improved.

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS INSTEAD OF SHEEP: A second run for this Academy Award nominee that really adds nothing to the Joseph Lilley-supported version. The Crosby philosophy from WHITE CHRISTMAS is a pleasant enough ditty - but one of a lifetime? Surely not,

(LOVE IS) THE TENDER TRAP: With a rather laid back approach Bing produces more of a matinee performance than the late night special that this song really merits. Meanwhile, the orchestra is off in all directions looking for the unifying leadership that is usually more skilfully applied than here. In fact, it

could be argued that this one has not gained a lot by the musical updating.

SHE'S FUNNY THAT WAY : An inspired arrangement supports a superlative Crosby vocal that gets us back on the right track. More than excellent this performance is the quintessence of combined talent sparking together in perfect harmony. Rich in musicianship and abundantly Bing - pure gold!

LITTLE MAN YOU'VE HAD A BUSY DAY: It came somewhat of a surprise when I first learned, by a preliminary release sheet that this song was to be featured on what is a predominantly fairly sophisticated album. After all, it had begun life as a very early evening song, popularised in Britain by Billy Cotton (and in the States by Smith Ballew) though it also enjoyed a spell of popularity as a dance tune - certainly at most village hops. But Bing's eventual recording with Buddy Cole was a gem and, in view of his long association with the broad classification of childrens' songs, it was a lapse on the part of Jack Kapp not to have had Bing record it when it was first popular. Perhaps it came just too soon for Bing who was then, in 1934, more taken up with romantic ballads and torch songs. Almost certainly he must have sung it on the radio at the time. Now we have the 'Fifties gem ressurrected and presented in this collection. Song of a lifetime indeed it is and this is how a really superb recording - beautifully arranged and orchestrated; appealing but never cloying, the rich Crosby tones full of authority and matchless understatement. Happy then to see that it WAS included, for it is a musically emotional experience.

AT SUNDOWN: This song gives me particular pleasure because I always associate it with one of the two television shows that Bing did with Perry Como - marvellous entertainment. Dating from 1927 the song is very melodic and it is a fitting inclusion under the album's title, especially when sung in this leisurely, throw-away manner. The muted accompaniment breaks out for a punchy eight-bars of considerable contrast and some excess.

LOVE'S OLD SWEET SONG: Pete Moore's arrangement is strictly bontone for the closing number contributing sensitivity to the pleasure of hearing Bing sing this Victorian song. He has several of this genre in his recorded repertoire, and though he sings them straight there is none of the impassiveness usually associated with baritones who specialise in drawing room ballads. Here there is a subtlety in timing; a roundness to the phrasing; warmth with the resonance, and sentience in the style. A fine finish to an album which is a remarkable summation of Bing Crosby at his mature peak.

EDITOR: Plenty to mull over to agree with - or to disagree with, was Bert's more than affable invitation. And, undeniably, at this juncture, I am NEAREST! The dover of the sleeve? I like it! Dignified and while not a good likeness of Bing, is 'representative' (given a picture can be!) - by which I mean not absurdly young, nor yet brutally old. As I wrote to Ken Barnes. The colours are - dignified....note the ICC did not merit a mention this time! Was it that 'bounder' John Marshall, yours truly who reported the undertones of Leeds? Naughty, naughty! Just an oversight, no doubt. I felt Bert stamped the collection WARMLY APPROVED - tho' not actually putting it in so many words; no doubt walking the diplomatic tightrope.

The title: well, it can be just songs that cropped up in a life-time, or more significantly, it could mean the BEST songs of a life-time. I think the former is applicable in this collection. Some of the songs are - for me - instantly forgettable. Ah, but some are marvellously evocative; and all are for the most part sung in good Crosby style though one cannot but help wonder at the cruelty of a fate that had the BBC running some of those marvellous 30/4/40's films when this album appeared. Bert put in a very piquant saving clause when he ended up with "...Bing Crosby at his mature peak." That mature assumes a tremendous significance, methinks, when songs like HANG YOUR HEART ON A HICKORY LIMB, SING A SONG OF SUNBEAMS, and that fabulous version of MELANCHOLY BABY (from BIRTH OF THE BLUES) were vibrating over the (TV) airwaves. Ah, that 30's - early 40's voice....but we mustn't run on about that here, for it crops up later on.

And odd quirks! They abound. Take LOVE IS THE SWEETEST THING written by Ray Noble 'on commission' for the Jack Payne & his Band film SAY IT WITH MUSIC. In 1932! When Bing was making his BIG BROADCAST! The song was a big hit of that film - still considered one of the best musical films made in Britain and yet it has disappeared without trace so there is no chance of re-viewing it now. Jack Payne himself - I can see him now sitting at the piano and singing LOVE IS THE SWEETEST THING - had a big hit with it; and assuredly Al Bowlly did with Ray Noble's New Mayfair Dance Orchestra. And like most of Noble's compositions it has become a 'standard'.....

LITTLE MAN YOU'VE HAD A BUSY DAY was also a tremendous hit, but I've always considered the reason Bing didn't put it on wax was because it is, essentially, a "lady's", or mother's song...sorry, song. Many olders members will recall Kitty Masters's success with it with Henry Hall and the BBC Dance Orchestra; or Elsie Carlisle with Ambrose & his Orchestra; or Phyllis Robbins with (probably) Charlie Kunz; Anne Lenner with the Savoy Orpheans and so on. Very few men seemed to sing it, for obvious reasons, so I was interested in Bert's mention of Smith Ballew doing it in the States. But such is Bing's feel for a song that it in no way sounds odd hearing him interpret this very 'human' song. As a matter of interest, if Ken Barnes ever contemplated a single from this collection I would suggest STRAIGHT DOWN THE MIDDLE and LITTLE MAN. The former for the new hordes of golfers (and because it is the song most members have been asking for for years - I once wrote to Phillips suggesting a reissue on this account. Without reply, naturally!) The second title for the mum's - the doting mum's - who can easily produce a million-seller. I always liked the song - still do, especially Bing's version.

I was a little downcast at Bert's knocking of THEY DIDN'T BELIEVE ME. Lovely tune, devoted lyric! And whatever else, its survived the test of time, surely. THE TENDER TRAP, YOU'RE SENSATIONAL, MOONGLOW and a few others I need never hear again and feel no sense of loss. In fact, I remember buying a 78 in the early 30's (not a Bing) and MOONGLOW was on the reverse. I didn't like it then - thought it a dreadful dirge; and to show that distance doesn't always lend enchantment, I still think it a dreadful dirge. Bing's version not excepted!

YESSIR, THAT'S MY BABY has always been a good vaudeville song-and-dance man's song...snappy but uncomplicated. TRUE LOVE was and is

interesting because it is the first time we have heard Bing duet it with a professional singer. And a professional singer of real class at that. I thought a big improvement on the Grace Kelly well-meant naivete.

The version of PLEASE DON'T TALK ABOUT ME &c. Bing did on the radio with (I believe) the Firehouse Five plus Two must have been one of Bing's happiest (and most hilarious) performances - certainly one of my all-time Crosby favourite numbers. And besides which all other versions (including the Cole/Moore one) seem drab and colourless. The earlier version referred to produced one of Bing's most stunning jazz ad libs ever heard, surely.

One of these days I'll have to write a little piece on Latin-American music if Bert keeps prompting with his asides! Having become a self-taught authority I'll endeavour nevertheless, to make it readable. The LA music I care for greatly is the indigenous variety, NOT the percussive Latin-American music so commercialised today as bosa -novas, beguines, meringues and so on - not the big-band stuff of Xavier Cugat and Edmundo Ros though much of their music is attractive. No, I think of the galops, polkas. gentle beguines, romantic songs of stirring and heartrending loyalty to a gimcrack, tatty old country.....like Chile, or especially, Paraguay. Still, I do like Bing's YOURS....

Although denied the privilege of anything like a preview, I did nevertheless get an early hearing of the collection whilst still trussed up in traction thro' the kindness of a couple of readers who will assuredly remain unnamed because of the blatant infringement of copyright! The 36 titles fit nicely onto a C90 cassette. But in amelioration of this culpable offence if any Phillips exdcutives read this, I had already got Mrs. B. to buy two copies of the double album - which I was, of course, unable to play then. Thanks to the members concerned: wild horses will not get me to divulge their names!

The brevity of most of the items i.e. no repeat choruses, or repeats from the 'bridge' may puzzle people unfamiliar with the origin of the tracks. Still brevity is the soul - of something!

Bert's dismissal of SO RARE would not please JIMMY DORSEY for whom it was a million-seller! Not easy for an instrumental number.....

MAIL definitely gives the utmost and enthusiastic approval of the collection - by about 90 per cent highly delighted and 10 per cent averring the items would have been just as good untouched. The answer to that is that the sole idea was to modernise the collection for a wider audience than the few thousand would gobble up the tracks untouched.

And it would indeed be a gloomy curmudgeon, a No. 1 sourpuss with a crabapple face, who could, hand on heart, say the tracks had been harmed in any way!

It is noticed that in TRUE LOVE - lovely effort - Bing and Rosie exchange the harmony that Bing and Grace Kelly used in the finale.... then Bing took it; in this one Rosie takes it.

Many readers did pose the rhetorical question: What would Bing have thought of the transformation? I have another. What would BUDDY COLE have thought? We'll never know, of course, in either case.

That stereophonic golf drive is quite something, isn't it? Reminds me of a chap who had the origimal single for years and complained it had a pressing fault. Came the day when he pointed it out to me - he had failed completely to associate 'straight down the middle' with a golf shot! It is even more startling now.

Seems too that LOVE IS THE SWEETEST THING/TRUE LOVE might make a good single - if the market could stand the latter second time around.

One is bound to remark that the rhythm section - particularly on the up-tempo numbers of course - is magnificent. Lifting, bouncy....AT SUNDOWN is a special delight though the section's work is a delight throughout. One assumes that it is 99 per cent Pete Moore's!
I think AT SUNDOWN is the swingiest, swingingest number to be heard.

I hope someone will enlighten me as to the 'Theme from Picnic' in the MOONGLOW track. At the m[illegible]nt its a mystery to me....

'For Frank Sinatra she'll scream and stamp - that's why the lady is a tramp!' That's okay by me - as they say - we all know what the Americans mean by a 'tramp'.

Can't help wondering who chose all these songs originally - Bing or Buddy Cole? Knowing that in days gone by Bing sang whatever Jack Kapp or Sonny Burke put in front of him, I would lean to the view that Buddy Cole was responsible for this radio repertoire. Chronologically it darted around in delightful and intriguing fashion.

With no reservations AT ALL, the highest accolades are due to Ken and Pete for the 'surround' put to LOVE'S OLD SWEET SONG. Oddly, because it was done by an entirely different team, it reminded me of WHEN I LEAVE THE WORLD BEHIND. It has the same, warm, orchestral embrace. What a tremendous pity it was so brief....

And a certain Humberside member who need not remain nameless - for it is ALF FARROW - will be entranced at the inclusion of LOVE'S OLD SWEET SONG. Many years ago he lamented to me that Bing had never sung this fine song; he liked it because it had been a favourite of his father's, and perhaps even his grandfather's. I was able to tell him that Bing had in fact put this on record, even tho' it had been briefly on one of the singalong albums - can't jump up and down to check as I used to!

Well, I've gone on long enough, as Bing said in his 1975 message to the ICC dinner at Leeds - had more than my fourpennyworth, I suppose. But Ken Barnes's most worthy effort is a considerable milestone in Crosbyana and fully earns sd much coverage as possible. I do feel, as I've said elsewhere, that the technical achievement might have received wider publicity - and acclaim. I might whimsically mention that one reader asked the question: Where will it all end? Are we on the threshold of hearing Bing singing HOME ON THE RANGE, with the London Symphony Orchestra accompanying him, vice Lennie Hayton?

Who knows? Ken has blazed a trail - and it seems that anything is possible now by means of these silicon chips! Except, possibly, solve the problem of unemployment.

Which, it seems, is what it creates - again, not within the scope of BING! Except that it may stop some members buying the records they want...because they have been made - redundant....

With the big one dealt with at some length, BERT BISHOP continues KEEPING TRACK in somewhat briefer style. The following notes would have appeared in the March issue.

There is not a great deal to report though there are a few 'collectors' items' to hand which will always be of interest to some members. In any event, as you know we like to maintain these columns as a continuing addendum to THE BING CROSBY LP-ography, noting not only new releases but also those that may have slipped thro' the net in the first instance. And I might point out again that the details of the records shewn regarding origin indicate that these records seldom appear in the usual shops and indeed are often extremely difficult to obtain.

Firstly, the rumoured mysterious 'single' does exist and with diligence may be tracked down: LITTLE DRUMMER BOY/HEROES (Non-Bing), B & B Records, France, 45-100. The first title is the duet by Bing and David Bowie featured in Bing's very last Christmas Show, and recorded in the UK.This 'pirated' version is not outstanding but it is yet another example of the many unusual partnerships which Bing been involved in over the years. One thinks of Wm. Bendix, Harpo Marx and Jascha Heifitz, to quote a trio which could be said to cover the sublime to the ridiculous - tho' not in the order given.
The label is plain white with blue printing and is cut for juke-boxes. HEROES features Bowie only.

(ALI BABA & THE 40 THIVES Wonderland WLP 314 US
(MOTHER GOOSE/THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES WLP 79 US
(HOW LOVELY IS CHRISTMAS WLP 121 US

Here are three reissues of albums that for a long time were very hard to come by - MOTHER GOOSE SONGS has been most elusive until now. The labels are yellow with black print and the whole package still conforms to a simplicity associated with childrens' records; which they are, tho' the philosophical NEVER BE AFRAID has considerable adult appeal made more so by Bing's fine rendition.

BING CROSBY ON THE AIR: Sandy Hooker Records (Distributed by Radiola SH 2002 (Release No. 2 1978)
This is a direct equivalent of Totem LP 1008 details of which may be found on p. 146 of the updated LP-OGRAPHY.

BIX BEIDERBECKE & HIS ORCHESTRA: Philips B 07020L France

Oh! Miss Hannah: This is the only Bing title featured on an LP that is, as the title suggests, associated with the great cornet player of the 'Twenties.

TREASURED MEMORIES - FILM STARS ON PARADE: Audio Archives LP 0026 US

With Every breath I take: Bing can be heard singing just a few lines of the song. The recording is a soundtrack excerpt from the 1934 film HERE IS MY HEART. How long this LP has been around I have no idea!

DOROTHY LAMOUR: Legends 1000/4 12" US

Side 2 (last item)
HOLLYWOOD PALACE 26th November 1966 Duet - ROAD TO MOROCCO, MOONLIGHT BECOMES YOU, MOON OF MANAKOORA, BUT BEAUTIFUL, APALACHICOLA FLA, YOU DON'T HAVE TO KNOW THE LANGUAGE, SUNDAY, MONDAY OR ALWAYS, ROAD TO MOROCCO - performed on stage on one of the many occasions that Bing was Host to the series. Fidelity is quite good and this is

(KEEPING TRACK contin. p. 54..

DO THE RECORD

COMPANIES KNOW THEIR BUSINESS?

There is room - very much room - to doubt that they do. How often does one see huge record sales, with records selling at a fraction of the price they were only a few weeks previously? And one reads that 95 per cent of the huge pop output is a failure - all is staked on the hope of the fast-buck million-selling record which gets the 70p per single out of the hot little hands of the teenagers. When I run thro' the records at these very regular sales my feeling is not surprise that they haven't sold, rather that they were ever made!

Still, we're digressing as, alas, is a habit of ours. We were thinking also of the figures for Bing's record sales - and of the impossibility of the real total ever being known. Surely, as there are so many companies involved, so many labels, these sales are no longer computable? Take that CHRISTMAS IS A'COMING album put out the Christmas before last by MFP - the racks then, and the Christmas just gone, were packed with them. And they all seemed to go.

But, the companies are getting fewer! We can only hope that Decca keeps going - in fact, that it even goes on the offensive. For the truth is EMI seem to be heading for a complete monopoly, especially when they snaffled the American Decca (or MCA) contract from English Decca.

And then, would you believe, in THE DAILY MIRROR of February 7 last there appeared the surprising financial page item that such a company as United Artists (which, of course, handled Bing's final albums) had got themselves into - and out of - an incredible mess!

In case you missed it, it read as follows:

"The EMI record giant is buying Shirley Bassey and a string of other stars for a song. It is paying a mere £1,500,000 to take over United Artists Records, an American company which has Miss Bassey, Charlie Rich, Kenny Rogers, Dr. Feelgood, The Stranglers and other notables on its labels. (It didn't mention Bing Crosby)

"Why," continued the newspaper report, "do they come so cheap? Because United Artists, despite its star-studded labels, has managed to run up debts of £16 million, which EMI must shoulder.

"But chairman Sir John Read reckonds its a good deal, because it will boost EMI's flagging sales of records overseas.

"EMI relies heavily on its music business, where profits slumped to under £17 million last year against nearly £33 million in 1977.

"EMI said last night: 'American artists are currently very popular the world over and this acquisition will strengthen our position for selling records.'"

End of the MIRROR report - and what an illuminating one it is! EMI's record sales themselves sagged.....

Its a fair question then, surely - do the record companies know their business? Seems there is plenty of room to doubt that they do.

And should the day come when THAT'S WHAT LIFE IS ALL ABOUT and Bing's other UA albums might be reissued it will be EMI that does it. Unless, of course, they meanwhile sell to someone else....

Who can say for sure now who, for example, owns the rights of the Warner albums, or the Reprise? I've lost track.

W.H.EWERT, Timber Stones, 35 Chislehurst Rd., Bickley, Kent, BR1 2NJ:-

I was driving home on Christmas night at 10.45pm and switched on the car radio. Idly twiddling I suddenly picked up a Bing tribute programme with a female commentator. Just as I expected to hear the station identified at 11pm with the end of the programme it was drowned out by a foreign station. I have made enquiries without result. Did anyone else hear it and can enlighten me please? (Ed: Sorry - I can't!)

A SURPRISE NEW BOOK

BING CROSBY

REVIEWED BY THE EDITOR

A LIFETIME OF MUSIC

BY LAURENCE J. ZWISOHN

Out-of-the blue comes a most excellent book, entitled as above - and written by a member of the ICC. But I must confess that until this book arrived so unexpectedly I wasn't aware that Larry Zwisohn was an author and journalist - so that his always-enthusiastic appreciation of BING (and the Circle) is even more valuable.

Larry has, fairly quickly, produced a really worthwhile addition to printed Crosbyana and we have no hesitation at all in commending to our members.

To the book itself: it is neither a paper-back nor yet a hard-cover. Something mid-way between the two; it measures 10¾ by 8½ inches - as wide as this page and just about three quarters of an inch shorter in length. The cover is glossy in a soft light brown tone while in darker brown is the title, author and - predominating - the familiar silhouette impression of Bing, complete with Bing's signature. The printing process appears to be that of electronic stencilling and the overall effect is extremely neat and very readable - both as regards print and content.

The back cover proclaims it to be "The first book about the musical career and recordings of the world's most popular singer..." This may not, in fact, be strictly accurate but certainly it is a highly original publication containing many entirely new features. For example, it contains an exclusive interview with Al Rinker, of whom Larry told me:

> 'When I interviewed Mr. Rinker it was hard to believe that it was 52 years since he and Bing had first recorded I'VE GOT THE GIRL. Mr. Rinker's mind and memory are better than mine will ever be. His memory of dates and events was amazing. After talking with him I would cross-check them with other references and almost without exception he was correct.'

And Al's interview, as described in the book, ends '....Bing's talent wasn't technical, it was natural. You could give him any note and just like that, he had it. He had a marvellous ear. He had a good beat. He could sing jazz and he could sing ballads. He had a great sense of rhythm. He had it all. There's never been a truly pop singer who could sing and interpret a song like Bing.'

Al Rinker recalls things right from the very start with Bing, but in his own words. Of how, in early 1924, as 'kind of head' of the Musicalers he introduced Bing as drummer - and singer.

The foreword to the book has another scoop, as it were, for it is written by the famous composer, James Van Heusen who, of course, wrote prolifically for Bing's films from 1940, providing songs such as SWINGING ON A STAR, MOONLIGHT BECOMES YOU, BUT BEAUTIFUL, THE ROAD TO MOROCCO, PUT IT THERE, PAL and many others. He was in a position to know Bing as intimately as anyone got to know Bing and his remarks are not only interesting but certainly intriguing.

BING CROSBY: A LIFETIME OF MUSIC contains, in addition to the foreword, 17 sections of which not unnaturally, THE COMPLETE RECORDINGS OF BING CROSBY is easily the largest. It consists of an alphabetical listing of song titles recorded by Bing, including the date, the composer(s) and the label. It does not, however, include catalogue or matrix numbers though it does include the various labels. I haven't, as perhaps a thorough reviewer would have done, gone through this section with a fine toothcomb but some rudimentary cross-checkings show it to be accurate. The author hopes that someone somewhere WILL produce the full and complete discography. Our ROAD TO BING CROSBY needs little to fulfill that historic function. And incidentally, it is gratifying that BING and the ICC are warmly mentioned in the ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS section.

There are 20 full-page pictures which have reproduced well. They are of song-sheet title pages, album covers and film publicity title-pictures. One of the more unexpected features is a list of the songs that both Bing - and Elvis Presley recorded! Not together, of course. There is also a small chapter on the Crosby and Presley careers - providing, possibly, the only feature with which this reviewer would find grounds for dissenting from....but that's purely a personal view.

There's a list of Bing's most notable accompanists, his Christmas influence, Bing the songwriter, Bing and Friends, The Final years on record and a host of interesting features.

Where do you get it? And how much is it? The two questions that require immediate answering. The book is published by:

PALM TREE LIBRARY,
PO BOX 84268,
V.A. BRANCH
LOS ANGELES, CA 90073.

The cost? Larry writes: 'I have tried to keep the price as reasonable as possible. The price of 8.95 dollars (USA) includes postage (at the book rate) and handling. The book rate, alas, means a considerable delay in receipt in Great Britain and elsewhere but the cost of first-class mailing would be prohibitive for most people. IF THEY WISH TO GO TO THE EXTRA COST I WOULD BE GLAD TO FORWARD IT FIRST CLASS.

It is pretty generally known that the £ equates to two dollars so that the price is £4.50p including the book-rate postage. If I had seen this book on the shelves I would be very happy to pay that price for it. It is excellent value, bearing in mind the cost of publication these days. Consisting of 150 pages, the book weighs just 1 lb so that airmail posting would cost approximately 50p if I have read the post office instructions correctly for 'book' mailing though that seems absurdly low and I feel it is not correct. In any case, the USA almost certainly has a different system and different rates. Larry Zwisohn's address is:

233 S. Barrington Avenue,
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90049
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

and perhaps a preliminary enquiry will get you the rates. I imagine ordinary surface book mail takes 2-3 months.

This is indeed a fine addition to Crosbyana and it should prove of absorbing interest to ICC members.

LETTER FROM AMERICA

Many were the tributes paid to Bing on his death; we're still catching up on some of them. Alistair Cooke's talks on BBC radio are something of an institution and we feel his talk following October 14 1977 is eminently suitable for reproduction here. It has been transcribed for us by The Rev. Michael Collins:-

Mr. Cooke had been talking about Groucho Marx first - .....

- The other great man was a world apart from Groucho in geography, upbringing, temperament and talent. I'm talking about Harry Lillis Crosby, who for reasons as obscure and debatable as the origins of the word 'jazz', was known from boyhood as Bing.

Some years ago, a friend of mine in San Francisco, a publisher (we were all three members of the San Francisco Golf Club), thought of persuading Bing to sit down in several sessions with a tape recorder and put out a book of reminiscences. My friend was very steamed up about this project and he came to me one day and said: "I've got the main thing. I've got the title."

"What's that?" I asked him. He cast his eyes to Heaven and he said very slowly, "MY FRIENDS CALL ME BING' How do you like it?"

"Four words too many," I said, and truly I don't suppose there are, or were, more than two or three people in the world who would be instantly recognisable - and all around the world - by a single word.

I first ran into him on the set of one of the early Hope/Crosby Road movies and I think I got a false impression of him right away, because he was, if not exactly rollicking, saucy, mischievous, almost gabby when he was working, especially with Hope. They, on that day, I recall, ad libbed so much and broke down in chuckles so often while they were being filmed that at one point Bing turned to a writer who was sitting beside the camera and said: "If you hear any of your own lines, shout BINGO!"

Of course, Bing was witty in a droll, wry, way. Nobody else would have described his face, with its flapping ears, as looking like a taxi-cab with both doors open. But the movie image of Bing was a very high pressure version of the man off the set. Once the lights dimmed and the director said 'It's a take' Bing visibly drooped into a character so quiet, so shambling and low-key, that I always got the impression that he'd had a sleepless night and would soon be off for a nap.

People used to say to me: "What was Bing like playing golf? I'll bet he was uproarious. Right?" In fact, he was relaxed to the point of boredom - good-natured boredom. Its true, he always looked you in the eye, but they were the grey, steady eyes of a man who had seen everything; a lot of fun, but also a lot of grief, and was never going to be surprised by anything said or done.

From his early success days with The Rhythm Boys and on into his

movie career, there had been all sorts of problems in and around his family and friends - sickness, death, the bottle, truancy, trouble with his boys, until he came into port at last, after a lot of stormy seas, with his second wife and his new family. It is possible that he talked about these things to very close friends, but to everyone else he put up the quiet defence of off-hand, easy-going, small talk.

I cannot think of another man of anything like his fame who was so unrattled and so steadily, unflaggingly, modest. The curse of show business, you know, that strikes even the greatest, is Prima Donna-ism, the massive ego; the implication - they affect to hide - that the whole world is revolving around them and their new picture, their new plans, which they pretend to find delightful but embarrassing.

Not Bing. He was more mature than anyone else I've known in coming to sensible terms with great fame. His mail must have been staggering and appeals for favour and money from every charity and every crack-pot in the world. He never mentioned it. He was polite to every nice fan and every child and every moron who hailed him. All his later concerts and Pro-Am Golf Tournaments went to his own charities.

When he died there was, as you know, a spate of film clips and re-played old interviews and the like. The most startling and revealing of these was one done very shortly before he died by the American news-interviewer, Barbara Walters, who has a knack for asking the piercing, child-like questions we would all like to ask - but don't dare.

She asked him to sum himself up and he allowed that he had an easy temperament, a way with a song, a fair vocabulary, a contented life. And she said, "Are you telling us that that's all there is - a nice, superficial shell of a man?"

And Bing said: "Sure, that's about it. I have no deep thoughts, no profound philosophy. That's right, I guess. That's what I am."

It was so startling, so honest and probably so true that it explained why he had been able, through hard times, to stay on an even keel; why, because he didn't over-identify with other people's troubles he was able to appear, and to be, everybody's easy-going buddy.

And because death is so profound and so dramatic, so showy, that's why some of us cannot believe he won't show up in the locker-room tomorrow and say: "Well skipper, how's tricks?"

Editor: Hmmm....while there is some merit in this talk I for one believe Bing had summed up that woman reporter and thought 'If you want to ask damn fool questions like that you're gonna get dam' fool answers...." Empty shell - superficial? Rubbish. Bing was one of the most complex, and deep-thinking men that ever lived. But he would never say so - and not to a casual interviewer for certain.

I WAS ON A TROOPSHIP when Bing Crosby, who entertained us, broke his pipe. I asked him for it. Bing obliged. I had the pipe repaired and now keep it to bring back memories.

BILL ROLFE.
(Isle of Sheppey, Kent)

An item in the NEWS OF THE WORLD (3.12.78) spotted by Adrienne Dodds (Chesterfield). Quite a souvenir; this must have been September, 1944.

...are always welcome - and appreciated. Letters on general aspects of Crosbyana should be addressed as shewn below right; discographical letters, letters on new or newly-discovered recordings should be addressed to either BERT BISHOP, or COLIN PUGH....anyone writing and NOT wishing their letter or any part of it published should specifically say so - and that's about all!

ARNOLD BAKER, 48 Groomsport Rd. Bangor, Co. Down, N. Ireland:

I was, quite frankly, appalled to read the article SMITING THE PHILISTINE by John Marshall in the last issue of BING. To tear his entire article into shreds would be a simple matter but I prefer to deal with certain salient points only.

In the first place, he titles his article SMITING THE PHILISTINE. Such a nice, friendly opening! Roget's THESAURUS defines 'Philistine' as: "Bitter enemy, sworn enemy, open enemy, public enemy, arch enemy, devil'. Can ANYONE really believe this of Ken Barnes?

John speaks of 'the rape of his precious Bing/Buddy Cole library'. Personally speaking, I think John should count himself lucky indeed to have such a library of those wonderfully warm and intimate tracks from one of Bing's best recording periods. Alas, we cannot all be as lucky as John - but, the RAPE of his library? Ken hasn't actually violated John's precious tapes, has he? In my innocence, I understood (from Leslie Gaylor, no less) that Ken had obtained his material from the Crosby office, which will have full powers of approval - or otherwise - of the completed recordings next Spring.

John mentions Ken's opinion of that 'awful mid-50's organ sound'. Ken, who is most certainly a Bing fan, is as entitled to his opinions on all aspects of Bing's career as are the rest of us and it matters not one whit that he doesn't like the early 1930's either. I do, but my opinion is no more valid than Ken's.

In John's last paragraph, he says of Ken: 'If it makes a few bob, what the hell?' This is, in my view, a gratuitous and vicious insult to Ken Barnes. May I enquire 'what the hell' John expects? Does he, for example, envisage any 'present-day producer' as he terms Ken, laying out large sums of money (either his own or that of backers, if backers could be found) on an undertaking as big and expensive as this, with Ken's belief that sales would probably be limited - if the tracks were left as they are now - to aficionados like ourselves? And, therefore, inviting a serious loss? John really must wake up from his dream world and face the stark facts. With Ken's methods - and the colossal amount of hard work put into this exciting project we will at least have another half-dozen or more great LP's to enjoy and treasure, for with Ken's previous output as a guide, great I am certain these forthcoming sounds will be.

Lastly, I must sincerely hope that the 'heckling of a distinctly hostile' mentioned by friend Reg as 'what would have happened if Ken had not been as honoured guest' will never come to pass - <u>for whatever the reason.</u> at any gathering under the auspices of the ICC. Such things can safely be left to the London School of Economics, certain universities, trade union meetings and the like. But at the Leeds ICC meeting? Perish the thought!

REG BRISTO,
7, Greenmeadow Close,
C W M B R A N,
GWENT NP44 4PJ

Editor: I hope no-one else took too seriously the headline to John Marshall's story in the December BING. It was just a gentle, Biblical, complement to a 'Sabbath in Leeds' - the Sunday meeting of the ICC. Nobody would, of course, refer to our Bing-benefactor-Barnes (Ken of that ilk) as a 'Philistine' with malice aforethought! And apart from remarking that I always found Buddy Cole a sound musician who played the organ with great taste and restraint, all else that need be said about Arnold's letter is to remind you of his 'personally speaking...' It is a point of view; John Marshall's was also - and there were others:

JOHN BYRONE, Tone Street, Ballina, Co. Mayo, Ireland:

I remember the Autobiography sets was one of the first batch of records I ever bought. I was in my 'teens at the time and I saved for five months before I had enough to buy it. I remember when I finally got it I played it from the beginning right through to the very end without a break. Who could blame me when, at the time, most of the songs (except perhaps for the 'last' side of the set) were all new to me. It has remained my favourite listening occupation.

You will see then that I am one of the people who wish Ken Barnes would leave well enough alone. I kkow from a sales point of view he has to do them up and mbollish them but what I don't like is the fact that he soundssso ENTHUSIASTIC about it. He might as wwll call the album(s) IN SEARCH OF BING.

I gather from reading the last BING that there hasn't been much on TV concerning Bing. The same is true here except that we did have, on the night of October 14th last the Oslo concert. It was great. And it was sad. Great because Bing was in great voice, sad because the camera showed only too well Bing's restricted and, I would say, painful movements

ARTHUR SPILLETT, 50 Goldings House, Hatfield, Herts:

Cannot understand the fuss regarding the Bing/Buddy Cole recordings; for a number of years now I have had a number of them in my collection and the quality is excellent. I would imagine they would go down well if issued in LP form suitably edited as a lot of the dialogue would be of little interest to the average listener today. Rosemary Clooney's duets with Bing are particularly good so let's hope something is done in the near future to increase the interest and pleasure for allBing lovers.

Editor: Well, something IS being done as you will have gathered! And a little misunderstanding here: there was never any question of issuing the radio programmes for which these songs were made, so the question of editing out dialogue doesn't arise. It is well-known that Bing - and often Rosie - would lay down perhaps a dozen of these songs at a time and Buddy Cole would re-accompany and then they would be slotted into the programmes as required. It is true, of course, that some members do indeed have the complete, original, radio programmes on tape.

MAURICE CHANTRY, 177 Kent House Rd., Beckenham, Kent:

At leagt we've got something to look forward to in the way of records. Intrigued over the Ken Barnes/Buddy Cole project. I reckon they'll be marvellous....I was very impressed with Gary (Crosby) on THE LIFE AND LEGEND TV show - always thought of him as a bit of a rascal but he seems to have grown up now. He spoke with true love and affection for the 'old man'....

KEN DEACON, 'Cheriton', Chilworth Rd., Chilworth, Southampton:

Most interested to read about the proposed treatment of the Buddy Cole tracks and fear the worst. I had always thought how good the issued Cole tracks were in their original format. Its a pity, I feel, some more cannot be issued in their virgin state.

Editor: Well, that's coining a phrase!

MERVYN POWELL, 6 Morfydd St. Morriston, Swansea, Glam:

I acquired THE GOLDEN AGE OF AMERICAN RADIO which is excellent - but why the recording companies have not got around to giving them stereo backings baffles me. However, its nice to know that Ken Barnes at least intends to do just that. There should be a huge market for the updated versions. Whilst about 90% of my Bing records are mono and they are pleasing but cannot compare with the more recent ones in stereo on my hi-fi....

Editor: Another slice of heresy here, methinks! A large body of Crosby collectors (and it really is large) abhor the stereo and echo treatment given to old Crosby 78s. It stands to reason that unless reissues are doctored with an ersatz 'stereo' they MUST be mono. Ken Barnes's of course will be of a different category altogether. His WILL be new stereo embellishments. Personally, if I' may be so bold, I don't mind the stereo backings attempted simply because I think that on the whole stereo is a considerably over-rated feature, introduced mainly to stimulate the record player industry - and I'm not saying THAT'S bad. But unless one sits in the prescribed radial position (that is, in the centre of an arc of a circle between the two speakers) the effect is largely lost. And if more than one is listening how do you seat them? And in connection with Mervyn's final comments, if one only wishes to hear stereo recordings in hi-fi conditions one rules out about 95 per cent of Bing's repertoire! Still, to be fair, he did say the others were pleasing.

BILL McLEAN, 15 Barnton Park Aven. Edinburgh:

I'm looking forward to the projected Buddy Cole albums with a great deal of interest tinged with some misgiving. I would like the originals but if, as it appears, it is to be 'doctored' material or no material at all, I'll grab the updated LPs with both hands....

TREVOR WAGSTAFF, 49 Dawes Ave. Hornchurch, Essex:

Unlike John Marshall, I am longing to hear the Ken Barnes/Pete Moore Orchestra arrangements added to the Bing/Buddy Cole 50's recordings and am surprised nobody seems to know how these went.....

Editor: Well, it seems certain members (or others) have heard some of them but I have no solid news.

JACK WOAD, 71 Castle Crescent, Thornhill, Dewsbury, West Yorks:

Definitely opposed to any interference whatsoever with Bing/Buddy Cole originals by Ken Barnes - or anyone else.

Editor: Well, its succinct, anyway!

MAY BYRNE, 8a Stocksfield Drive, Little Hulton, Worsley, M28 6RB:

I must say that I agree with John Marshall and his views of Bing Crosby

and Buddy Cole recordings. I shiver to think of Bing or Buddy Cole being mixed up in the awful noise that they call music or singing today. I love my autobiographical records and other Buddy Cole tracks.

KEN CROSSLAND, 13 Queens Crescent, Ossett, W. Yorks, WF5 8AU:

I see the harbingers of doom have struck up one or two voices as regards the enhancement of the Buddy Cole tracks. I feel sorry for Ken Barnes having his work pre-judged like this when none of us have heard the results - in fact, we probably can't even imagine what they will sound like. Moreover, surely the point must be emphasised that, were it not for these market-orientated enhancements, we would not get the tracks in any form. The record industry is geared primarily by commercial rules, and we must accept this. The alternatives are either to try and make a project economically viable - a la Ken Barnes - or to opt out as most record companies did in respect of Bing material in the late 60's, early 70's. I know which option I prefer and furthermore I'm sure that Ken's work will sound better than some of the wretched 'electronically reprocessed stereo' we've had to suffer in the past.

Editor: This rather paraphrases what was said mid-way down page 14 of the last issue. And perhaps Ken is less than fair to Geoff Milne of Decca who fought for, and succeeded, with his host of Ace of Hearts albums. And one might well say, too, we'd rather have the 'wretched "elecfronically reprocessed stereo"' - than nothing at all!

FRED REYNOLDS, 69 Heathmere Avenue, Yardley, Birmingham B25 8RQ:

I think that people like us are a little apprehensive about what 'modernised stereo' treatment might be given to the Bing-Buddy Cole sessions but at this stage we would, as suggested, do better to just wait and see.

Editor: Fred was one of the eminent Crosby-collectors who compiled both THE ROAD TO BING CROSBY discography, and the filmography, THE ROAD TO HOLLYWOOD. As one would expect, he perceptively points out what was said, precisely, on page 15 of the December BING, about two-thirds down the page!

This subject has, as will be appreciated, produced a large mail and readers will accept, I hope, that the above letters are a fair representation of the ratio of their content. And now we might turn to less contentious correspondence.

SYLVIA CRELLIN, 127 Glastonbury Rd., Morden, Surrey, SM4 6NY:

Please could you thank, through the magazine, the person who sent me a cassette of Bing's Christmas music. My aunt thought the postmark looked like "Romford". We played it while we were having Christmas dinner and really enjoyed it. I have also heard from two other members of the Circle. After waiting over an hour for buses to get home from work, and what with all these strikes and the very cold weather, we got home one evening and saw these cassettes and thought after all things weren't so bad when people could give up their time to record tapes for me....we made a cup of tea and sat by the fire - and listened to the tapes.

Editor: We told you about Sylvia in the last issue (p.44) and I hasten to thank the kind members who got in touch with her. But I wasn't really surprised.....

HELEN CAIN (and her Dad) 14 Windsor Rd., Prescot, Merseyside:

Hope you had a wonderful Bing Christmas and a Happy New Year. I know I haven't written for a long time but since I joined the Circle I've been writing to Mr. Geoff Chappells and we've been sending each other tapes and things. I first wrote to him when I asked The Daily Mirror to put a picture of Bing in Pubbic Opinion, one of its features. Mr. Murphy sent me some lovely pictures. And Mr. Evans sent me CALL ME LUCKY....

Editor: Helen is the young teen-ager who writes on behalf of her Dad as well as herself - when I remarked a year or two back that she was her Dad's secretary she sternly informed that she was a Bing admirer in her own right, if you don't mind! Helen headed her letter BING PEOPLE ARE GOOD PEOPLE; the envelope was marked: DIAL O'O FOR O'MALLEY - to let the Post Office know!

Now I well understand the stern-visaged discographical researchers will be muttering: What the heck is BING coming too...let's have more RESEARCH and REAL information...' Right, understood. Point taken but we do try and cover all the aspects of Crosbyana. And when you consider Sylvia Crellin's letter immediately before young Helen's these are aspects of our subject we do NOT ignore. As a matter of fact, Helen has unconsciously repeated a remark I made to the gathering at Leeds - perhaps five years ago - which was that I never failed to be impressed by what nice people devoted Bing admirers invariably turn out to be. If they were NOT, and if I didn't firmly believe that Mr. Crosby was a beautiful singer, the complete and entirely unique artist of the century and a great man in ANY sphere, I would not put every spare minute I have into editing this magazine and endeavouring to meet the postal requirements of all the members. There are ther artists I admire, some quite profoundly but it remains true there is NO other artist than Bing I could possibly make one-hundredth of the effort I make in his name. Sorry to be "fan-ish", prissy and not the tought sometimes jaded hardline collector some feel I ought to be (sometimes I am!) but I do insist that all aspects of Crosbyana are featured in these pages. And if they include the human, sometimes sentimental and usually the very sincere aspects, so let it be. Thank you Helen (and your Dad) and a happy New Year to you too, even at this late stage - though judging by the situation as I write, perhaps we'd better start the year all over again!

The needle seems to have stuck on the ladies! AUDREY COOPER, 30 Broadway East, Carlton , Nottingham NG4 1AG:

Thanks for the Christmas issue; I have to be very strong-minded when it drops through the letter box to put it aside while I do the necessary tasks such as washing and cooking. One glance inside and as far as I am concerned its going to be two hours at least with BING and all other things become of no importance. Its most heartwarming to have all the news of the many projects of Bing.

I enjoyed the Leeds meeting so much. We had to leave early so did not hear Ken Barnes's news of his plans regarding the Buddy Cole-Bing numbers. I feel very apprehensive and much I fear as John Marshall about it. I hope we are not going to get the 'drum solos' which spoiled some recent tracks for me. Bing was beyond compare with jazz (John Bignell) and quite superb.....I read recently in THE DAILY MAIL that Bing's granddaughter has thoughts of making a punk-rock record of WHITE CHRISTMAS! What next?

Editor: Sorry to have relapsed into the BING/BUDDY thing again; the punk-world has lost its Messiah in grotesque circumstances

in America. We need no more evidence perhaps that there is something seriously wrong when the media elevated these misguided, unfortunate, youths (of both sexes) to "news" and thus afforded them quite unwarranted and disastrous publicity.

Drum solos Audrey? Hmm.....never let it be said, either, that Bing was the cause of the washing going unwashed, and the dinners uncooked.....

PHIL WOOD, 59 McDonald Rd., Edinburgh:

Regarding the report that Bing was offered the part of Colombo, the highly successful TV detective noted for his doggedness and his scruffiness, have you ever wondered what would hage happened if Bing had accepted the part instead of Peter Falk? Of course, it would have been Bing's interpretation of the character but wouldn't it have been great to have seen Bing in a regular series and just think of the spin-offs that would assuredly have resulted from his doing it. Records, albums, etc., probably riding high in the charts....ah well!

Editor: An interesting point for conjecture. Its quite impossible to say whether or not Bing would have had the same impact as Falk undoubtedly had in his very individual treatment of the part. These things are in the lap of the Gods no doubt. But it would have been too much for Bing to undertake at his age. It is well known that a long-running TV series is a very, very exhausting and demanding project - not always appreciated, possibly, by those of us sitting at home enjoying it! Which is why an artist, after suddenly getting us all hooked on a series, often decides he won't make any more! But no doubt Phil is right - it would have highlighted all over again Bing's multi-talents had he been able to undertake the role.

TONY HARRISON, 47 Elphinstone Rd., Hastings, East Sussex, TN34 2EG:

Last December I was fortunate to be present at a marvellous theatrical event which I feel should be recorded in the magazine. WHERE THE BLUE OF THE NIGHT, staged at the Connaught Theatre, Worthing, proved to be a splendid musical tribute to Bing. The Shirley Western Showband provided the music, Brian Matthew narrated and there were vocals by Jon Barrett. Some elaborate dance routines were staged to accompany the recorded voice of Bing which was prominently featured. A ballet sequence performed to SEND IN THE CLOWNS was particularly effective.

However, the climax of the evening occurred towards the end when a group of suitably attired children gathered round a huge Christmas tree which dominated the stage. Bing's Christmas songs and carols were played as simulated snow began to fall and a neon cross was suspended above the tree. As the audience departed to the strains of WHEN I LEAVE THE WORLD BEHIND I swear there wasn't a dry eye in the house. It was a great pity the show was not repeated at other venues - or even televised.

A tribute of a different nature was held at the National Film Theatre in September last (as other members have reported). Three Crosby films, THE BIG BROADCAST OF 1932, ROAD TO SINGAPORE and GOING MY WAY were screened in the larger of the NFT's two theatres. It was nice to see the theatre full to capacity (a rare occurrence there) for the first two films and if the management takes note of its box office returns we should get to see many more of his films. GOING MY WAY was not so well-attended, due I expect to the lateness of the showing and also to the fact that it has been seen recently on TV. However, it was as well received as the other films which were applauded at the end. As an added bonus, ONE MORE CHANCE, BILLBOARD GIRL and HOLLYWOOD ON PARADE were shewn between the main features. Incidentally, the NFT had ob-

tained a remarkably good print of THE BIG BROADCAST, a film which I thoroughly enjoyed.

On a sadder note, Rosemary Clooney who was due to tour here and sign copies of her book, as well as record ROSIE SINGS BING, at Guy Norris's record shop in London, had, according to that gentleman, collapsed in America and is now hospitalised. Let's hope she gets well soon.

And finally, may I take the opportunity of extending greetings to all the wonderful friends I have made in the Circle - Yvonne Bowles and family, Brenda and Don Trowell, Pam and Harry Nolan, Eileen Waters, David Ward, James Dineen, Ken Crossland, Frank and Alma Murphy - and to you, Reg. Thanks for the past four years.

Editor: Assuredly Tony's good wishes will be warmly reciprocated. Sad news about Rosie Clooney; the bottom must have dropped out of her particular world, too, when Bing died for as her book reveals, Rosie has certainly had her troubles and seemed to be getting back into better fortune in so many ways. And despite so many other worthy partners, I will always regard Rosie as Bing's best fellow-duettist. I always find a peculiar bitter-sweetness about her voice, most piquant.

The show at Worthing sounds a most moving event. It is a pity it cantbe seen more widely. And members are still writing to tell me how much they enjoyed BING AND BRASS which has indeed been more widely staged and is still touring the country.

RON MILLS, 18 Percival Rd. Feltham, Middlesex, TW13 4LF:

I was born on October 18, 1924; Bing made his first recording on October 18, 1926. And he was buried on October18, 1977...its a birthday I will never forget. Normally, I forget about my birthday (one tends to) but how can I do that now? I don't have a large collection - unlike my friend Les Gaylor on the Isle of Wight - great chap, I met him when on holiday on the I.O.W.... We were watching TV the day Bing passed away but I said to my wife "Let's have Bing on." Being a Crosby admirer herself she readily agreed. No particular record was chosen, just one at random...it was getting towards news-time on the TV which we turned right down but kept the picture there. It may seem unbelievable but the record started to play, and it was WHERE THE BLUE OF THE NIGHT. Then appeared that ghastly news-flash - BING CROSBY IS DEAD.

My wife and I looked at each other, uncomprehending. It wasn't true, of course. I tried to ring the BBC to find out how come they make such a terrible mistake? Wasn't he so well, wasn't he singing so well just a day or two ago? I couldn't get through - and then the full news bulletin. And it wasn't a mistake.

We went to bed stunned - as no doubt millions of others did. I'm not ashamed to say I wept. As was stated by Mr. B.W.Fitter of Birmingham so movingly in BING no. 48 (a wonderful issue): I felt I had lost my dad all over again.... But as we're all agreed, thank God Bing left so much. He will never really leave us....

TONY McCORMACK, 29 Garth Rd. Morden, Surrey:

I only returned from Canada last week (late January) where I was in Toronto for Christmas and the New Year. And what a feast of Bing on TV there! In one day I watched GOING MY WAY, BELL'S OF ST. MARY'S, and WHITE CHRISTMAS. Also on that day they showed ROAD TO RIO, CONNECTICUT YANKEE and a film I had never heard of called NOEL BLANC!

This was, of course, the French-speaking version of WHITE CHRISTMAS, but I didn't watch this. ROAD TO ZANZIBAR was also shewn, so Bing fans had a really big Christmas treat. Bing was constantly heard on the radio - and was even most prominent in the supermarkets! They don't, it seems, let the great stars fade away in Canada.

Editor: A treat indeed and not to be compared with our meagre rations. Bing was quite prominent on the radio over the holiday, however. The galaxy of TV channels in America and Canada allows a great choice, of course. And it so happens that another of our members - Fred Thompson of Hereford - was also in Canada and shared in the TV delights!

STAN WILLCOX, 21 The Littleway, Leicester, LE5 4PN:

Isn't it amazing how one comes across a note or story about Bing in the most unexpected places. My wife found this item in a Market Research Paper and I am sure you will find it of interest:

"Among their many customers was the late Bing Crosby who ordered 100 of their silver golf ball markets engraved with the initials B.C. and a musical note for his golf tournaments, and this 'thank-you' letter is amongst their proudest mementoes.." (From Fashions of the Rag Trade).

Editor: It is indeed surprising how Bing's name crops up; I noticed the other day, for example, that Ampex recorders and tapes are still proudly incorporating in their advertisements: BING CROSBY WAS OUR FIRST CUSTOMER!

ARNE FUGEL, 5943 Fremont, SD. Minneapolis, Minnesota, 55419, USA:

I enjoy the magazine but I feel I must say that at times I have a little trouble with some of the positions expressed from time to time. Please remember that it is not necessary to continually run down the popular music of those whose tastes are foreign to your own. I wouldn't mention this except for the fact that it has become quite common, sometimes three or four times an issue. We are all fans of the great Bing Crosby. Beyond that, it makes me (and perhaps some of your other readers) feel 'left out' because I don't agree with some of your opinions on subjects having nothing to do with Bing and his career.

You frequently take the attitude that one who appreciates the music of such latter-day performers as The Beatles, Presley, etc. is some kind of tone-deaf idiot. I am not a tone deaf idiot. I am a veteran of over three hundred commercial and recording sessions and radio shows, a pro musician who has studied and tried to learn as much as I can from ALL the great musical personalities through the years. The variant qualities of different types of pop music are not <u>fact</u> - they are matters of <u>opinion</u>. Believe me, as the guy in the middle, I hear just as many arguments against Bing and his music from the rock fans. And their carping and critizing sounds very much like that which I read in BING. I am not, of course, trying to change your opinion. Just a thought I had to pass along. You do a great job, a very literate job, and we all appreciate it more than words can tell. Your pop music pot-shots only cheapen the effort, however, when they evaluate types of music in which you have little or no experience.

All this is mentioned with respect and admiration. If I didn't care about you or respect the job you do, I wouldn't even bring it up. Incidentally, my singing has been very much influenced by Bing. I am certainly not as good as he was, but he has always been a goal, a target to aim for. The greatest of all time. I'll always be

grateful for the part that you and Mr. Gaylor played in the Crosby career of the last years. I am interested in what you and the other BING people think of some of my comments here. Controversial they may be - but I am as aware as anyone of the fact that you have much to be proud of.

Editor: I haven't been able to work out whether Arne Fogel is complaining about various contributors to BING, or to me personally. Actually, I didn't think we had too much to say about the present 'pop' scene. Just as well that I do edit out some of the more scurrilous comments! If Arne does refer to me personally perhaps I should be all contrite and say that modern pop is pretty good, you know. But I'm afraid his homily is completely lost on me. Furthermore, I think that it is people determind to find something good in it that results in its continually descending styles, of which PUNK appears to be the current one. I will make no bones about it, speaking personally, of the two examples quoted I can never see them as musical personalities. Phenomena of a kind, difficult to explain, but NOT musical. The group broke up after a couple of years of frenzied adulation; the other, if I remember rightly, was the inspiration of all the sensual, hip-swaying, non-voice singing which is today accepted. He was largely inarticulate and his acting, if you will excuse the term, came near to wrecking the great Hollywood tradition. It is said one mustn't speak ill of the dead, with perhaps a certain Herr Hitler as the exception) but I do feel the young man in question was a victim, albeit a wealthy one, of people who should have known better.

BUT, I will concede one thing to Arne and like-thinkers: we have to be clear about which pop we are talking. My comdemnation is directed at the multi-thousand decibel cacophony which gets ALL the publicity, ALL the air-time, and more important, all the money - 'laughing all the way to the bank' to use their own idiom. And those behind them who promote the maniacal 'Top 10, Top 20 etc.

BUT, I AM WELL AWARE THAT THERE ARE FINE MUSICIANS, AYE MANY OF THEM YOUNG, WHO ARE DOING BRILLIANT THINGS AND FIGHTING AGAINST THE TIDE. BUT THEY ARE NOT 'LAUGHING ALL THE WAY TO THE BANK'; they are thankful to survive. They make up perhaps 10 per cent of the whole. The other 90 per cent is, for me, unmitigated rubbish. Worse, I often think everyone KNOWS it is. And we have it on the best authority from one who is well acquainted with the situation on both sides of the Atlantic, that the US scene is infinitely worse than ours. God help them. I should like to know from Arne, or anyone else for that matter, what of today's music in the pop sense, is likely to go down to posterity. As Arne so rightly says, it is a matter of opinion, but to those of us who have spent (it seems) a lifetime following and listening to Bing Crosby. its tough, mighty tough!

Still, BING and the ICC do not exist to discuss the merits or otherwise of the current musical scene - and Arne Fogel has put his point of view. Though as a final thought we may concede that, largely, the music of today REFLECTS today - lack of taste, permissiveness, drugs, the desire to overturn old standards.....and while not acquainted with Arne's efforts we're sure he is of the 10 per cent and not the ninety.

BILL HUNTINGTON, 266 Westminster Rd., Morecambe, Lancs:

Listening to Bing singing THERE IS NOTHING THAT I HAVEN'T SUNG ABOUT I am intrigued at the mention of '..that song from Zhivago..' This is one I would like to hear - if it exists!

Editor: Bill has got me! There was a popular song from that film but I'm blessed if I can name it - or whether Bing has sung it.

P. X. SOARES, 96 Norfolk Rd., Seven Kings, Ilford, Essex:

I was interested to read about Jack Harris in the States whose voice is reputedly to resemble Bing's. I wonder if he has made any recordings on discs and if so I would like to hear same. Are you aware of any of his records being sold in the UK?

Editor: Mr. Soares was one of a great number of people who were glad to read of the strange story of Jack Harris in the last issue - and to learn that it had a kindly ending, thanks to Bing just before he died. Also many members are curious as to whether or not Harris has made records. So far - and we're awaiting news from the States - we've seen none nor heard none in this country. But it certainly would be interesting to hear him.

RUTH TINLEY, 16 Lincoln Rd. North Hykeham, LINCOLN LN6 8HE:

My American friend sent me the enclosed - she does not say its source. I rather like it and think perhaps you will:

BING -

There he goes!
Idol of our youth,
minstrel to our salad years,
jouster against the dragons of decline,
in our diminished stable
the most beloved of heroes.
The last score posted,
that jaunty, gallant stride has carried
him beyond the farthest course.
In his place never,
no, never will blue meet gold again.

Emina Wesner,
Lee's Summit, Mo.

Editor: We like it too, Ruth - and our acknowledgements to the unknown Emina.

ROY & ADRIENNE DODDS, 24 York Str., Hasland, Chesterfield:

We are great fans of Reginald Dixon (Mr. Blackpool) and he has just completed a countrywide series of final concerts. We saw him at the City Hall, Sheffield and saw the master at his best despite his 74 years. Just like Bing, he was at his greatest. We also went to one of his concerts round about the time of Bing's death at the Albert Hall, Nottingham and we discovered that a friend of ours had informed Mr. Dixon of our visit and our connection with the International Crosby Circle and in the second half of the programme, Mr. Dixon mentioned the request for a Bing item for two members of the ICC

who were present in the audience. Reginald Dixon then went on to say that in 1958 he had had to undergo an operation on his arm which could have resulted in him being unable to play again - a calamity or potentially so. He said that although he had never met Bing he had received a telegram from him wishing him luck on the outcome of his operation - a telegram which Reg still treasures today. He then said that he had decided to change his programme in order to pay tribute to Bing, a tribute which last for about fifteen minutes and contained some of Bing's most popular songs. His efforts received a tremendous ovation at its conclusion.

Editor: This certainly strikes a personal chord with me for I too have been a great admirer of Reg Dixon since around the time he started his fabulous career of MR. BLACKPOOL at the Tower Ballroom. Although in an entirely different field, though of course, both were entertainers on the grand scale, the careers of Reginald Dixon and Bing had a lot in common apart from that basic fact. Both recorded regularly from almost the start of their careers. Indeed, Reg Dixon is STILL recording and must be the longest-recording organist ever. His broadcasts from the Tower - and since - have been regular and prolific and, certainly, both were held in the highest public esteem both for their musical gifts and for their personal integrity as artists. If Bing's audience was more international than Reg Dixon's that can be appreciated. I did have the pleasure of at last meeting Reg a few years ago and enjoyed about a two-hour chat immediately before he took his place at the console! I recalled the delight with which I used to rush home from school at mid-day to catch his lunch-time broadcasts in the 'Thirties - and of how we looked forward to the winter when Reg was able to temporarily leave Blackpool and visit the Granada's, Odeons, and Gaumonts all round the country.

And Bing's gesture of a telegram at a traumatic stage of Reg Dixon's career is, as we know, typical.

Reg's stint at Blackpool lasted - just 40 years! I always regard him as "master-organist" and it is to be hoped that despite his "farewell" tours he will continue to delight us with his great talents, if only on records.

MRS. MAY BYRNE, 8a Stockfield Drive, Little Hulton, Worsley, M28 6RB:

How I wish I'd known about the ICC years ago. People have been so kind to me...perhaps I could even have written to dear Bing and thanked him for all the comfort his records gave us in the War. My husband was a POW for five years and the Red Cross (God bless them) managed to get some records and of course, more importantly, something on which to play them. And always there were so many of Bing's records. They meant so much to my husband, and therefore, to me too...I could weep when I hear some of those old 78s for the memories they bring back. I suppose that's what Bing always means to so many other people, too...

Editor: It is indeed - the man behind millions of dreams, literally millions, beyond computing. And...I do get the impression from the prolific and eloquent mail I receive that there has been a kind of delayed shock: some people seem to be just realising what happened when Bing died - just what, indeed, a part of their lives he had been....

BING, BUDDY, PETE, & KEN NOT FORGETTING PHILLIPS !

Here is presented, in accordance with our desire to deal widely with the new double album, a selection of members letters regarding the issue; they are a fair reflection proportionally of the letters received - Editor

LES STREET, 8 Wyfan Place, Mynachdy, Cardiff: We have still not seen the Vol III from CBS but the 2-LP set on Phillips of Ken Barnes's SONGS OF A LIFETIME more than makes up for any disappointment. The set is superb with Bing in great voice. I hope you have already had the pleasure of this set...one track I like in particular is UNCHAINED MELODY. After listening to such good stuff one can hardly wait for the box set due out, I understand, around next Christmas.

RITA STROMMINGERS, 60 Fieldway, Lindfield, Haywards Heath, Sussex:

I know a lot of members were dubious about the adding of new backings to the Bing/Buddy Cole tracks but I think it has been done well and the tracks are great. It must surely be true also that although some would prefer them as they were originally recorded, to release them like this must be better for the 'modern' market. And whatever one's views on the matter it is great to have a NEW RELEASE again. Although I have been very pleased to get the various albums of Bing's early recordings which have been released in the past year or so, I must say this is not my favourite period. I hope I don't get expelled for saying such things!! Perhaps because I have only known Bing from the 'Fifties onwards I love to read members' memories of those early years in Bing's career. It must have been an exciting era...

Editor: Exciting era! Impossible to describe - tho' we old 'uns keen 'having a go!' But we cannot repeat often enough - we know Rita was joking about being expelled - it is up to anyone to get what they want from Bing's fabulous career, whatever decades they fancy! Rita added a lovely horticultural note: 'Our local florist has some lovely BING CROSBY TULIPS in his window; this really cheered me up on a gloomy Spring day - but then, Bing always did, didn't he?

TONY PEVERETT, 7 Burgh Mount, Banstead, Surrey: I think the new SONGS OF A LIFETIME is quite superb and I only hope it proves to be a big success for Ken Barnes. I wonder if he plans to do any more issues of this type? In just one or two tracks I found the new orchestra slightly overwhelming but by and large it is a most worthwhile addition.

Editor: Yes indeed, if this IS successful - and the signs are that it is, very - then Ken plans the box-set of perhaps half-a-dozen albums, together with his warmly-awaited book on Bing.

TERRY WARDROPE, 44 Melloch Crescent, Tillicoultry, Clackmannanshire:

The new Phonogram album is a marvellous set. I haven't stopped playing it since I got it last week. I feel Pete Moore and Ken Barnes should be congratulated on this wonderful issue.

DOUG HAYWOOD, 14 Weaverthorpe Rd., Woodthorpe, Nottingham:

It was with some trepidation that I parted with my pound notes and bought the double album of Ken Barnes, SONGS OF A LIFETIME having, as I said last time, thought that the 1970's records of Bing left a lot to be desired with regard to Bing's voice being, as it were, not to the fore as we like it to be. But, I think they are marvellous. This is assuredly the albums of the '70's. Properly presented I predict sales of a million. All thirty-six songs are superb. I hope Ken and the technicians have noted down all they did because if there is more to come - and I hope so - then this is how it should be done.

ERIC GRIFFITHS, 31 Badgers Way, Thundersley, Benfleet, Essex:

Interesting to see the new double album is No. 29 in the selling lists. Ken Barnes, no doubt, will be pleased - but not with me, as I told him I hate the records. As a collector my views are unchanged. I cannot stand the false backings that have been introduced, despite all the clever work involved. Buddy Cole's marvellous work has almost been elmminated, certainly the organ is hardly heard now. Could we not get the originals (UNTOUCHED) issued as a club issue?

> Editor: Most unlikely, I would say, all the while the tracks are a sound commercial proposition, as they appear to be. I personally like the refurbished records (as I've indicated elsewhere). My only regret was that Ken - at Leeds - did rather unfeelingly dismiss the fine work of a fine musician, Buddy Cole, with his reference to 'that awful 50's organ sound'. I never disagreed with his commercial views of the tracks. Well, not violently! But, to Eric and the other 'purists', I feel it was time that it was pointed out that in most cases the UNTOUCHED version of these songs would be with Buddy's piano accompaniment only. Surely it is well known that Buddy himself 'doctored' (if that is the term) these more-or-less 'off-the-cuff' recordings with subsequent rhythm section, solo guitar, organ and other effects? We should have the record (sorry!) straight on this point.

JOHN MARSHALL, 39 Kings Rd., Teddington, Midd'x: So the Bing/ Barnes LPs finally arrived and I found myself, not for the first time, a willing convert to that which I had turned my ample beak up at hitherto. Not 100 per cent though, just to be awkward and based on my continuing belief that just as they were, if cleaned up expertly, the programme minus Pete Moore would still have been worthwhile - perhaps even better. There is a little too much time spent on being impr4ssed by this or that, or trying to fault what IS, after all, a synthetic product. Gradually you can shelve this and simply enjoy them as records of Bing, at which level they ARE good. The always-present spectre of advanced technology has got around many potential problems though, and while there is a slightly sharper tone on the injected material this may be the result of trying to spread Bing and the boys out far enough to meet the new edges. Nit picking again, I guess, and I am hopeful that when we do get a magazine again, somewhere in the later pages you might mention that my original fears were largely groundless - there was a full page of them, after all. It is simply that the man's attitude caught on a nerve and added to the impression that unless he

and Pete Moore tinkered with them, that which I had always admired was secondrate and worfhless. Still, its nice to have the set.

> Editor: John was, of course, the arch 'villain' who had the temerity to, very thoughtfully, place some of his impressions from last September's Leeds dinner on paper in the December issue of BING. It might be added at this juncture that John was only one of many who did so in similar vein but his was the most literate effort! However, I feel we may bury the knives now and mull over John's not ungracious acceptance of the fait-accompli!

Amd on that cordial note we can ring down the curtain, for this issue at least, on what is now largely an uncontroversial controversy!

Most members were highly gratified that SONGS OF A LIFETIME was made ALBUM OF THE WEEK on BBC Radio 2. As always, we must acknowledge tne unrivalled publicity push this gave the set. It must have opened the eyes, or rather the ears, to those thousands who still love Bing but are not sufficiently in touch (and are scared of mod[illegible] record shops) to know what recordings are available even these days. Scared of record shops? With good reason; one can enter one and find the walls pulsating with the latest rock effort. Pulsating to the effect that one fears for the safety of the building - leave alone the ear-drums. Then there is the inevitable crowd of (seeming) layabouts clustered around the 'progressive' section.... and one's hopes of a decent record despairingly disappear.....unless you brave the aforementioned circumstances. And it helps, of course, if you have heard on the radio that a new Bing [illegible]bum is available.

So to be ALBUM OF THE WEEK has incalculable publicity value; aesthetically I feel it is a doubtful privilege. One has to listen to an awful lot of rubbish music plus unending inanities to hear the isolated Bing offering. In hospital during that particular week (and others, of course) we steel/ourselves to listen to radio complete with Brandon (begging listeners to write in for a 'mench' (mention), and playfully 'running down' his friend and colleague, Wogan, whose meanderings often degenerated to inarticulate grunts, chuckles, and the like. We never saw the joke. That may have been us patients, who would often look at each other askance as if asking: Just what audience DO these people appeal to? When one considers the fact that the BBC hands over whole and tremendous slices of the day - sometimes up to 3 hours at a time - to these people, it is a frightening prospect. I say we 'steeled ' ourselves to listen, just to catch the news of the outside world.

I was also, alas, captive to a large slice of the Eurovision Song Contest. Remember? The Winner was Israel with a song called, I believe, Hallelujah - but I won't blame you if you've forgotten.

But it was the British entry that struck terror into one's heart - a song called MARY ANN, or perhaps MARIANNE. Used as we are to uncouth voices from these groups (I forget the name of this one - Black Marmalade, or Lacy Cobwebs something like that) positively YELPED! And what gave the evening a really nightmarish quality was that Israel provided a really splendid orchestra, beautifully attired; and the various 'composers' shook hands with the leader for all the world like the Liverpool Philharmonic - then to play 3 minutes of instantly forgettable tripe!

SUPPORT NEEDED FOR A GREAT PROJECT

We have received news of a most praiseworthy - and tangible - project to annually commemorate Bing's death. It comes in letters from LES HOWARD, well-known in the north for his connection with the celebrated NORTHERN DANCE ORCHESTRA. It reads:

I thought you would like to know that we are holding a BING CROSBY MEMORIAL SHOW at the Guild Hall, Preston, on Sunday October 14th - the anniversary of Bing's death as you will, of course, know. We are hoping to hold one of these each year for a well-known charity, and this year it will be in aid of the 'UNICEF Year of the Child! I have taken it upon myself, together with Preston Borough Council to launch this initial effort but future efforts would need to be discussed in terms of the particular Charities that have been suggested and also so many other relevant matters that would require total agreement with all concerned.

Invitations have been extended to prominent people and artists for the Preston show and I'm delighted that ANNE SHELTON has agreed to be there. Others invited are Val Doonican and Michael Parkinson.

To further the 'Anniversary Show' idea I have tentatively booked The Royal Albert Hall for next years venue - October 14th, 1980. Whether the Orchestra would be appearing again on that occasion it is not possible, at this stage of course, to say because it would depend on existing studio commitments at the time.

I don't want this idea to develop into another "GLENN MILLER" thing - but of course this could hardly happen. There has only ever been one Bing Crosby and I cannot foresee anybody taking over his mantle.

Les Howard's long-term view is for a permanent committee to organise what clearly should become an annual event and to that end has invited your Editor/Secretary to be one such member. The exact requirements are not clear at this stage but we have assured him that the ICC will warmly applaud and support his efforts. The Preston and Manchester concerts of Bing's were, like all the others, sell-outs and clearly - as we well know - we have scores of members in the North who will enthusiastically respond to the Preston effort.

If you feel you can lend any really cogent support the address is:

LES HOWARD
NORTHERN DANCE ORCHESTRA
88 Norbreck Rd.,
BLACKPOOL. Tel: 0253 - 55553

The invitation to Anne Shelton is particularly inspired for we all remember Anne's tremendous appearance with Bing in 1944, leading to a treasured piece of Crosbyana. Indeed, when I saw Anne sitting in the audience at the London Palladium, as enthusiastic as anyone in applauding Bing, I couldn't help wishing she were on stage with him then. One of Britain's greatest vocalists, surely.

THE FABULOUS LIFE OF GEORGE CARPOZI JR

BING CROSBY

MANOR BOOKS INC.

Those of us who have endeavoured to follow the life and career of Bing are apt to view any new books on him with a very jaundiced eye, knowing they will be filled with truths, half-truths, rumours, beliefs, and most of all perhaps, wild imaginings.

We know it is fairly certain a new book will tell us Bing made 50, 60 or perhaps 80 films; that he spent, actually spent! 30, 40 or even 90 days in jail. That he was at times close to being an alcoholic; how cruel he was to his first family of four boys. That he made the colossal number of 800 recordings, or 1200 such....and so on.

So, understandably, when a paper-back entitled as above turned up, and we read first: "George Carpozi Jr., award-winning reporter for the NEW YORK POST is known for his highly regarded biographies of Marilyn Monroe, Gary Cooper and Clark Gable" we really did fear the worst. With its front-page blurb, despite its number of recordings error, we were a little more encouraged:

> Bing was one of America's all-time favorite entertainers. He acted in 60 films, including the classic ROAD comedies with Bob Hope. And he made an astonishing 850 recordings including the best-selling record of all time, WHITE CHRISTMAS.
>
> Beyond his showbiz fame, Bing was one of America's - and the world's - favorite gentleman. He never became too proud to remember his humble beginnings; and he was never too busy or too successful, to help someone in need. On stage and off, he was justly famous for his humor and easy manner.
>
> But it is not only the entertainer and consummate gentleman who will be missed; Bing was a fabled sportsman, the part-owner of two major league baseball teams, the founder of a now-classic golf tournament, the owner of a racing stable. He played golf to the very end. His last words were: 'It was a great game.' And life WAS, for Bing Crosby, a great game.

By the time I had read the books 217 pages - almost non-stop - I was more than ready to agree with a remark by one J. Foley on its front-cover: THE ONLY BIOGRAPHY OF BING WORTH READING.

Now it may be that all members are familiar with this effort; I have been (and still am) out of circulation, as it were. Whether or not this book is freely available over here I know not. My copy was kindly sent to me by Arthur Samples of Boston, Lincs, and I am truly indebted to him for so doing.

The book does deal with all the snide and bring-him-off-his-pedestal remarks and attempts that have so scandalously been made since Bing's passing - and indeed before. But the author is able to factually dismiss them for what they are. And in the process certainly told me scores, if not hundreds of facts about Bing's life and career that I hadn't known hitherto. And I thought I was fairly well informed.

The author glosses over nothing; he tells of the tragedy of Dixie Lee, of the rumoured rifts and partings, her acoholism, and of their shaky times; he does likewise concerning the four boys of the first marriage. But he also illustrates that when it counted, all were together. For example, after Bing had publicly condemned himself for the way he had brought up his family, he proves with actual quotations that the boys were most hurt by this public 'confession'. Lindsay, he tells us, had tears in his eyes when he said: "How can pop talk like that? He was a great father...."

And in this connection, George Carpozi Jr roundly castigates one Chas. Thompson and his 'authorised' biography entitled BING, published (as we all know!) 1975. This is in connection with Thompson's remarks about how old the four boys were when they became aware that their father was something out of the ordinary. 'Preposterous remarks and observations' says Carpozi and after demonstrating otherwise further remarks: The question today is why such journalistic inaccuracy persists in this enlightened day and age in a book issued by a legitimate and respected publishing house which supposedly has editors who think to ride over such nauseating tripe.

One reads authoritatively, too, that Bing was virtually plagued with law-suits all his life - starting with his black-balling from the Cocoanut Grove. Suits were entered in the early days by unknowns claiming that some of Bing's biggest hit songs were 'plagiarised' from something THEY had written 20 or 30 years before; networks took out injunctions - and then came car-crash incidents with the boys and one big million-dollar plus claim against Bing himself for a car accident in which he was involved. The Los Angeles police, as a matter of fact, completely exonerated Bing in this instance - but typically, it didn't stop Bing making the 'injured' Mexican parties a fair, indeed generous, settlement.

Above all else, however, this book confirms the impression that we have always had of Bing - a gentleman first last and all the time, happy-go-lucky most of the time, agreeable - and uniquely talented. Bing was never subjected to any undue criticism throughout his fabulous career, but when it did come up it was astonishing in that it always was confounded - and not by deliberate intent by Bing. For example, when there were whispers that Bing had passed his best and was finding it hard to meet the newer fellas such as Eddie Fisher, Bing happily agreed that he had 'perhaps, been around too long.' And promptly made a new million-selling record! Or when Louella Parons, the feared Hollywood gossip colimnist wrote that she had it on good authority that Bing was retiring - within a few days it was announced that he was to make a new film, host the Hollywood Palace and goodness knows what else! One gets the impression that without effort Bing was able to refute, indeed confound, the slightest

whisper against him - and his activities. And that was how, the book says inter alia, how it was to the day of his death. Bing continued to go from triumph to triumph....

The book is, indeed, a mass of detail which most of us, I am certain, have not heard before. There are one or two passages only I found a little difficult to swallow. Take this one:

> 'By the year's end in 1943, Bing Crosby was summoned by Jack Kapp for a conference in Decca Records executive offices. As Bing sat beside Kapp's desk, a contract was shoved at The Groaner.
>
> "What's this?" Bing asked. "Your contract," Kapp said.
>
> "What about it?" "Its got 2½ years to go. You're gonna be 43 years old when this expires."
>
> Now Crosby's face began to cloud a little. "Yeah," I know he smiled. "These newcomers are climbing fast...."
>
> "Yeah," interrupted Kapp, "those Sinatras are really moving along, you know...."
>
> Bing shook his head. He still didn't know what Kapp was getting at.
>
> "Bing," said Kapp finally, "would you mind if we tore up our contract?"
>
> All at once Crosby's anger rose. In fact, he was furious.
>
> "Okay, Jack," he rasped bitterly. And Bing tore up the contract. He started to rise.
>
> "And now, Bing," Kapp shouted, "would you mind signing this new contract - which has an additional ten years to run!"
>
> Bing plopped down into his chair. He was speechless.
>
> "You'll be 53 when this contract runs out," Kapp smiled. "And I'm sure that at 53 you'll still be the best singer around."
>
> Of course, Bing signed. And he was destined to be the best singer around for almost a quarter century after his 53rd birthday!

Did hard-headed businessmen behave like that? I beg leave to doubt it. But they may have! Hard-headed business man - Bing? Oh yes, I think he was out of sheer necessity - the necessity forced upon him by his vast earnings, although of course, he had plenty of brotherly assistance in that direction.

In addition to the hundreds of facts this book contains, there are also 15 highly creditable photographs, films and personal.

The final chapter is numbered XX: 'ALONG MEMORY LANE' and reads -

"We are now in the post-Bing Crosby era. The Groaner is gone. He has joined those other Hollywood and theatrical stars who now

reside down memory lane—Clark Cable, Gary Cooper, Humphrey Bogart, Ronald Colman, John Barrymore, Dick Powell, Tyrone Power, and so many, many more.

They were, all of them, memorable, unforgettable stars who brightened the silver screen for so many millions of people through the grand and glorious years of motion pictures' most productive and rewarding years.

YET BING CROSBY, who was everything in movies—indeed the second biggest boxoffice draw of all time—was really known to most Americans, indeed fans through the civilised world, as a man of song.

More than the sixty-odd movies he made, more than the thousands of stage performances he played, more than all the times he crooned on the air and performed his song and dance comedy routines on television, BING CROSBY WAS A RECORDING STAR WITHOUT PEER."

> There followed a list of some of Bing's biggest songs, each linked to a comment of the times in which it was sung.

If I start too much quoting from this book I might end up reprod ucing the whole thing, so engrc ing did I find it. And as indicated earlier, it certainly contains some surprises. This one for instance: -

> 'In the fall of 1953, Bing returned to radio for his twenty-second year but with one familiar trademark missing.
>
> "I began thinking about it when I was up on the ranch in Nevada during the summer," explained Bing. "I was getting pretty tired of WHERE THE BLUE OF THE NIGHT MEETS THE GOLD OF THE DAY and I decided it was high time I had a new theme song for my radio show. The new number is an unnamed catchy melody that I heard being played on the piano one day at Paramount by Al Newman. I asked him what it was. He said it was just a little thing he was toying around with. I told him to toy around with itsome more because I was looking for a new theme song. Newman did just that and sent me the song. I liked it and we decided to use it on the show."'

That is completely new to me - not that that suggests the author was of imagining. Bing did confess that JUST AN ECHO was considered very early on as his signature tune instead of BLUE OF THE NIGHT but I had no idea he did actually change it as indicated in this book. The inference is that Bing sang it: so - what was the song? The author omitted to name it.

It is with sadness that we record the passing of ERLE FOSTER, of Liverpool. Erle joined us some years back in typical fashion - ".. seems I've been a Bing fan all my life." He often revealed his deep knowledge of Bing in friendly letters to me but never felt like bursting into print. He loved reading the Bing views of others.

A GREAT DAY / FOR THE FAMILY

circa 1928

Kate Crosby was thrilled when in her next letter from Bing she learned of the plans for the big broadcast. Her husband whistled at the news when she told him that evening.

"We'll have to get a radio set," he said.

"Can we afford it, Harry?" she asked.

"We can't afford not to have it," he returned. "Say, Bing'll probably do a lot of singing over the radio from now on. Just wait and see. I wonder if they'll announce him as 'Bing' or just 'Harry'?"

"I hope he does all right," she said. "You'd better say a few prayers for him—that's the best help we can give him."

"Well, he's doing all right," her husband returned with a puff of his pipe and some show of pride. "He's been back East about a year now—looks like the boys are going to be head-liners."

"Yeah," Bob chimed in as he entered the room. "I wouldn't be surprised if they get five hundred a week some day."

"You shouldn't talk like that," his mother reproached him. "Harry is just a boy yet—it will be several years before he'll be a headliner."

"Aw, you don't have to grow a beard to sing songs," Bob retorted.

The evening of the eventful broadcast was slow in coming for Kate Crosby. Her husband had a radio set installed in the living room several days beforehand and it was tested to make sure that they would not miss hearing their boy's voice. Kate made a special trip to the Poor Clare monastery to have prayers said for the success of her son's first radio appearance. In spite of herself she felt a certain amount of satisfaction: Harry must be succeeding to some degree or he would not be given this opportunity.

Half-an-hour before the time for the program, the Crosby family was grouped about the radio set. At length the program was announced and the strains of music from the famous orchestra floated out into the room. Kate Crosby sat back in her chair with an air of satisfaction. She fretted as the orchestra played several numbers—she liked them but was impatient. And then, at last, came the announcement, "a new number, GREAT DAY", and Bing's voice singing the verse, followed by the sextette singing the chorus. She listened enraptured, conscious of the exchange of pleased and incredulous glances around the room, and she unconsciously nodded her approval.

But as the orchestra went into another number, she realised that the names of the singers had not been announced and she almost winced with disappointment. Anonymity! Nameless voices to the thousands of listeners. Hardly head-liners.

(Cont over

This delightful scene is garnered from the book, THE STORY OF BING CROSBY, by Ted Crosby, published in 1946. One can appreciate the chagrin of Mrs. Crosby Senior at the 'anonymity' of her Harry's first broadcast - with Paul Whiteman's Orchestra as you will know. But within a couple of years that anonymity was to be shattered for all time as her son 's voice became the best known and the best loved the world over; and his name of Bing, not so much Harry, was to endure for probably ever more.

Her husband's prognostication that "Harry will probably do a lot of singing over the radio from now on..." was borne out in stupendous fashion.

> The song, GREAT DAY, must surely have meant more to Bing than we have hitherto considered. In the paragraphs preceding the above, the plans for the broadcast were put thus by Paul Whiteman:
>
> '...Boys, the sponsor wasn't quite sold on using MISSISSIPPI MUD on the radio. He figures it may be a little too jazzy for his product. Now, Bill is working up an arrangement of GREAT DAY from the Youmans Show, and he wants to use a sextette---John, Skin, Charley Gaylord and you three."
>
> For newer and younger members, Bill was Bill Challis, noted arranger for the Whiteman Orchestra; John (Fulton), and Skin (Young) were, with Gaylord, vocalists-instrumentalists in the famous orchestra. And in passing, one wonderswhat these singers, well-known in their time, thought of this 'new fella Crosby' - so soon to obliterate their efforts?

Only a couple of years earlier Bing, with Al Rinker, had set off to 'make his fortune' with, we can be sure, considerable trepidation. But that trepidation was as nothing compared to that felt by his loving mum - whose belief in the efficacy of prayer was quite steadfast. And in the light of what happened to her Harry she must have been right!

WHO WOULD BE SECRETARY/EDITOR ? -- "Would you please send me a list of all the records Bing has made. I believe he made quite a lot. I have all his albums since SEASONS; also, I have heard that he was married before and had an earlier family. Will you please send me details of this and all you know about Bing Crosby?"

> Whew! How can one condense a lifetime's accumulation of knowledge about Bing into a letter? And where have some of these people been? To be fair, however, this was from a young Canadian - a non-member (up till now) incidentally! Then there was this:
>
> "I'm writing to tell you that i haven't received the last three issues of BING...this is probably because I changed my address a few months ago....

Could be! Which reminds me: I'm astonished at the number of members who do change their addresses in a year! If one thinks of Crosby admirers as a settled crowd one would be completely wrong - they are in many cases, quite itinerant!

TRADING POST

...the feature wherein members are invited to advertise, free of charge, their wants - records, books, pictures, taped material and in fact all items of Crosbyana - and also their disposal of such items. This proves a boon to members and has resulted in some very happy transactions and friendships. It is not desirable, however, to exceed say half-a-dozen lines in space. Lengthy lists of items should be advertised by inviting enquiries with a SAE. Furthermore, items written on a separate sheet of paper are considerably easier to collate - and it goes a long way to ensure insertion. Dealers who desire to advertise lengthy lists - which are a welcome boon to members - may do so by arrangement with the Editor

I would like to write to members at home and overseas. I am 27, my hobbies are Bing's records, walking and meeting people.
Derek Collinge,
41 Marsden Hall Rd.
Nelson, Lancs, BB9 9PA

DICK NETTLETON, "Brackendale", Ferndale St., Faringdon, Oxon has a spare copy of CALL ME LUCKY and may be able to get a limited number more. Price seems to be working out at £5.00 inc. postage for good second hand with slight ageing. Send SAE (but no cash at this stage) and will deal with in rotation.

J. (DUKE) BOLTON, 33 Kilmington Rd., London, S.W.13 wishes to correspond with fellow admirers of the Mills Brothers and the Andrews Sisters with a view to exchanging material.

BILL HUNTINGTON, 266 Westminster Rd. Morecambe, Lancs - good price paid for HIGH TOR - BING ON THE HAPPY SIDE - SOME FINE OLD CHESTNUTS.

NANCY AND LARRY SHANNON, Rivers Cottage, 70 Oldfield Rd., Sale, Cheshire have a couple of dozen rare 78s, among them CONSTANTINOPLE, GET OUT AND GET UNDER THE MOON; collectors' items, all in good condition. Also LPs including MOTHER GOOD, BINGS ALI BABA, BING AND DICK POWELL, all in perfect condition. Fair postage arrangements...we WANT BING'S HOLLYWOOD 4, 8, 9, 12, 13 and 15. Would swop what they have to offer for three or four of the BING'S HOLLYWOOD listed.

MRS. RENEE CHESTER, 48 Milton Rd., Hanwell, London, W.7. has a large number of cassettes she is willing to copy for members; Renee wants: BING CROSBY'S ALL STAR PHILCO SHOW ASP 2001, and BING SINGS JEROME KERN and BING SINGS COLE PORTER, DOWN MEMORY LANE VOLS 1 and II, and the Jasum album BING CROSBY beginning with THE FIVE STEP.

JOHN BASSETT extends an invitation to all ICC members living in the vicinity of SOUTHEND-ON-SEA (Chelmsford, Rayleigh, Hockley, Canewdon, etc) to contact him regarding a get-together at BINGVILLE, 15 Oast Way, Rochford, Essex, SS4 1RZ. Films will be shewn, items of Crosbyana bought and sold or exchanged and Bing's Christmas message tapes played. A date will be arranged once a sufficient number of local members have expressed their interest.

Similarly, GORDON THOMAS, 50 Barnstock, Bretton, Peterborough, PE3 8EH extends an invitation to members in HIS vicinity....

ALL MEMBERS WILL BE AWARE OF THE COPYRIGHT WARNING PRINTED ON ALL RECORD SLEEVES REGARDING COPYING OF THE RECORDS. THE EDITOR TAKES THE VIEW THAT ALL OFFERS OF TAPING MADE IN THESE PAGES BY MEMBERS MEANS THEY ARE COGNISANT OF THIS WARNING AND THAT THEIR OFFERS REFER TO NON-COMMERCIAL TAPINGS, e.g. old radio material normally from the States, private recordings, message &c.

MICHAEL KNEFICK, No. 4 Friar Street, Youghal, Co. Cork, Ireland is keen to be in touch with anyone who has an interest in the late Mike Holliday with a view to exchanging material and information.

It is very plain that we are going to have to reprint our publication, THE A TO Z OF BING CROSBY pretty soon. Although it is of comparatively recent publication it is already in great demand - a demand that cannot be met for no copies are left. MRS. RENEE CHESTER (address on previous page) is most anxious to negotiate for a copy or, failing that, the loan of a copy.

BING ties, in navy blue or maroon, with the 'silhouette' motif of Bing in gold, may be obtained for the reasonable price of £1.60p post paid from:

RON BAXTER,
THE BADGE CENTRE
45 ROPERGATE,
PONTEFRACT,
W. YORKS WF8 1JY
(Tel: 702951)

Both background colours ensure the tie can be worn with virtually any colour suit. And it is a most attractive tie.

THE SOUTHERN BING CROSBY TRIBUTE CLUB is organised by PHIL CLARKE, 69 Walden Rd., Stamshaw, Portsmouth. It holds regular - and, I gather, highly delightful meetings there - of people living in the South. Films and video tapes of Bing are shewn. In this connection Phil invites all members interested in Crosby films and video tapes and the acquisition of same, to write to him. Phil's "Southern Club" sports a Bing-badge, available to anyone, at £3.50p. All members within reach are invited to attend the meetings to their distinct advantage. But write to Phil first for details.

If anyone taped the two-hour (Wm. Holden) tribute programme and/or the Christmas show from TV Mr. C. H. CULLEY, "Four Seas" Barrow Rd, Denbarn, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk is interested....

ALAN JENKINS, 15 Bramley Cres., Sholing, Southampton SO2 9LN is proud of his new Grundigg cassette recording and is open to copying for members.

MON(ATHAN) RUSSELL, 137 Midfield Way, Orpington, Kent, BR5 2QL: Offers nine cassettes (Memorex) of the first 18 Philco Shows, i.e. the first season, tape P1 being the first 2 shows, and P9 being Nos. 17 and 18 - they run in chronological order, £1.75p post paid; $4.5o (dollars), or £2.50 overseas.

C. CAMPBELL, 49 Loraine Rd., Dundee: Would like to get in touch with any others in the Dundee area about their mutual interest..... Bing, need we add?

PETER ROBINS, 24 Wycliffe Rd., London, S.W.11 (Tel: (01 if outside London) 223-0051 has some duplicate 78s, around 25, and doesn't 'want the earth' for them - just write or 'phone. But has anyone seen a Bing 'mirror' around? Those that are so popular now - usually considered old-fashioned but now back 'in'?

MR. E. M. ROWE, 12 Halton Rd. Carterton, Oxford, wants Part 15 of the Bing story on tape please - had to miss it when broadcast. (Doesn't say whether reel-to-reel or cassette - Ed) Imagine cassette.

MISS CELIA SHORT, 27 Congreve Rd., Worthing, Sussex would be very pleased to get in contact with US members who could help her with video cassettes. Celia's equipment can handle American types.

(Editor: I'm bound to interpolate here that I have been quite astounded at the number of members who acquired video recorders just recently! Recently? Well, in time to take the BBC series of films! And in view of the new budget it was most wise of them though I must confess that when one said he had sold his car to provide for the recorder I felt breathless. Another declared he had taken out a second mortgage on the homestead; I feel he was applying pressure to my nether extremity!)

Re Celia Short's ad. above - I should add the young lady would also like to be in contact with home video recordists....

AS MOST READERS KNOW, "BING LIVE AT THE PALLADIUM" was issued twice - early on by Pye on NE 951 and again on Bing's passing as NE 1016. In the States the second issue has been listed in some catalogues as "Volume II". This is misleading, of course, for the second issue is identical to the first except for the cover - and was handled by the high-pressure sales agency - K-TEL.

KEVIN ANDERSON, 455 N. Reeder Ave., Covina, California, 91724, USA is anxious, very much so, to obtain information on a 12" Victor 78rpm record entitled PETER, PETER PUMPKIN PETER - Al Rinker has broken his copy of this song which he helped to compose. Kevin also wonders if anyone knows anything of VOL III of AMERICAN RADIO (Deep label). Any information on both of these requests might be passed first of all to PHIL CLARKE of the Southern Bing Crosby above. Phil made the query on Kevin's behalf...whilst yours truly was hospitalised.

AS WE WRITE WE HAVE NO CONCRETE INFORMATION TO PASS ON RE. KEN BARNES'S BOOK, DUE TO BE PUBLISHED BY HAMISH HAMILTON. WE RATHER FEEL, HOWEVER, THAT THE JULY DEADLINE HITHERTO FORECAST WILL NOT BE MET AND THAT SEPTEMBER IS A MUCH MORE LIKELY PROPOSITION.

AND ON THE SUBJECT OF BOOKS, the one your Editor is most favourably disposed to - the paperback BING CROSBY by George Carpozi Jr., is published by MANOR BOOKS INC., 432 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10016, USA. There is NO British publisher in the copy I have - which seems a tremendous pity.

Many members have written of their chagrin on finding, after an expensive exercise, that the US READERS DIGEST set is, in fact, the self-same set issued here by WORLD RECORDS. Newspaper advertisements here in Britain did in fact carry the proviso "Under license from World Records".

The Mini Bing Crosby Discography remains available at £1.50p post paid (four dollars elsewhere); the LP-ography is virtually gone, alas. There remain just a few copies and these are without the glossy cover. BUT, a plastic spine binder has been used on these, making them a much more secure tome of 162 pages. Members desiring a 'working copy', i.e. one to write in, mark up &c. can have a copy for £2 post paid, 4 dollars to the States & Canada. The title page and contents, needless to say, remain complete and intact.

AND THIS ISSUE ALSO CARRIES THE LATEST MINI DISCOG. AMENDMENTS TO ALL BUT LIKELY TO BE OF INTEREST ONLY TO THE THOROUGHLY DEDICATED DISCOGRAPHERS!

KEEPING TRACK (Bert Bishop) cont.
from p.

well as being new-to-LP material rather than a rehash of some of the more well-worn radio programmes.

MARTHA RAYE — Legends 1000/5-6 2-LP — 12" — US.

Side 1 (last track) DOUBLE OR NOTHING; After You (duet with Francis Faye.
The duet is between Bing and Francis Faye and NOT between Faye and Raye!

BING CROSBY'S REDHEADS - LUCILLE BALL & SPIKE JONES — Amalgamated Lee-Bee Discs Specs SJ 101

Is you is or is you ain't my baby; I promise you; Old Black Magic; The One I Love; Jeepers Creepers, Glow-worm; Wade in the water; I'm making believe; With Every breath I take; Love is just around the corner; June in January; You are my sunshine; Darling je vous aime beaucoup; With a song in my heart.

Not all the songs are by Bing; they are complete half-hour wartime KRAFT MUSIC HALL shows with the commercials taken out. Fidelity is good but as always with this label, packaging is poor.

BING ON THE BOX:

This feature, tending to fall into neglect, comes back with a flourish! Bing records have been featured prominently on radio with the emphasis, of course, on the new SONGS OF A LIFETIME double LP. And we know many of our members have been in touch with various radio producers stimulating the playing of Crosby records. Album of the Week for LIFETIME was - with reservations noted! - a delight.

And on BBC-TV we have at last enjoyed a considerable run of Bing films- and talking of films, let's first study the picture opposite - especially by younger members! "Exciting era?" asked one. This was the sort of hoarding that stared at you on almost every street corner; while the voice of Bing came to you via cinemas, shops, fairgrounds, dance-halls - and homes, homes for certain! The powerful, vibrant voice singing SING A SONG OF SUNBEAMS, EAST SIDE OF HEAVEN, HANG YOUR HEART ON A HICKORY LIMB, PENNIES FROM HEAVEN and that seemingly incessant stream of smash-hit songs that poured from the screen and Decca records in that fabulous decade of the 'Thirties - though we hastily add, musically speaking. Not all the 30's could remotely be described as fabulous....

The cinema mentioned, The Stoll, was in London's Kingsway and one of the capital's finest. Note the prices "up to 1.30pm" for cinemas in those days opened at mid-day, some of them even earlier. And it will readily be appreciated that 6d, 1/- and 1/6d are, respectively, in today's currency, 2½p, 5p and 7½p! BUT, the average wage of a man was around £3.00 + . . Youngsters were earning around 35/0 (£1.75p) or £2.00 And a Bing Crosby Brunswick record cost 2/6d (12½p). From this it seems that today's record buyers - in the age of the LP - do not do so badly. The 30's contemporary review of the film PENNIES FROM HEAVEN makes good reading, too - with our hindsight! You will note, too, that it was necessary to 'explain' Louis Armstrong at that time! This film might easily have been included in the BBC's series (providing always that they have it) for it was another milestone in the Crosby career. Despite performances by other artists PENNIES is almost exclusively a Bing number and the favourite of many. Still, we could say that about many other Crosby films and songs.

(Cont.....

PENNIES FROM HEAVEN

Columbia. U. American. 80 mins.

Larry	Bing Crosby
Susan	Madge Evans
Patsy	Edith Fellowes
Gramp	Donald Meek
Hart	John Gallaudet
Henry	Louis Armstrong
Crowbar	Tom Dugan
Miss Howard	Nana Bryant
Warden	Charles Wilson
Concessionaire	Harry Tyler
Carmichael	William Stack
Mr. Biggs	Tom Ricketts

Directed by Norman McLeod.

ONE of the best pictures in which Bing Crosby has yet been seen. The story enables him to display his sense of humour, as well as to sing, in the rôle of a wandering musician who finds himself in trouble when he befriends a ten-year-old urchin. Pleasantly satisfying entertainment.

This entertaining picture refuses to take itself too seriously, with the result that it quickly achieves an attractively pleasant air, which it keeps up till the very end.

Probably as a gesture to those who are always criticising crooners, Bing Crosby is seen in prison at the beginning, though really innocent of the charge against him. Before he is released, a condemned murderer gives him a note to deliver to the family of the man he has killed.

Bing finds the family, which consists of a young terror aged ten, played by Edith Fellowes, and her grandfather (Donald Meek).

In the note, the murderer gives the family an old, ramshackle house. With Bing's assistance, the place is turned into a Haunted House restaurant. Most of the story, however, consists of Bing's efforts to save Edith from being sent to an orphanage. He gives his word that he will try to support and control the child.

The attendance officer to whom he makes the promise is portrayed by Madge Evans, and before long, she and the singer are in love. When doing a loop-the-loop stunt in a motor-car at a fair, Bing lands in hospital, and Edith is sent to an orphanage while he is away.

Bing naturally thinks Madge Evans is responsible.

Bing Crosby has several tuneful numbers to sing, but more important than this is the fact that he is given an opportunity to display his quiet sense of humour.

Edith Fellowes, as the incorrigible ten-year-old, is in fine form. She packs her performance with natural humour. You simply can't help liking her.

Donald Meek's portrayal as her grandfather is a delightful study, and Madge Evans, though she hasn't very much to do, is as charming as ever.

*** *Louis Armstrong, who makes his screen début in this picture, is famous as jazzland's leading "Hot" trumpeter; also recognised as "King of Swing." Born in New Orleans, he was brought up in the Municipal Boys' Home there, and learned to play the trumpet. Played this instrument at age of fifteen in a symphony orchestra; took up jazz two years later. Played on show-boats and on tour; gained fame a little over a dozen years ago. Has been a great success in London and on the Continent. His gramophone records are best-sellers. Has composed numerous "hot" tunes, and now leads a famous band.*

PUT YOUR SHIRT ON THE GROANER

THE most outrageous Christmas present I've spotted so far is this Bing Crosby sweatshirt, selling at £12·95, with snow falling over the old groaner's face and the opening bars of White Christmas written up one sleeve.

Also, for the ultimate in kitsch, white ties with pictures of Santa or angels on the front, at £3·45. All available from Dilemma, in Thackeray Street, Kensington.

CHRISTMAS ON TELEVISION always begins early. How else would the sponsors sell their products? And, to be fair, how else would the industry be able to pack in so many seasonal specials?

It all begins tonight at 9 on CBS with the late Bing Crosby on tape singing "White Christmas." It's a show recalling some of the great musical memories the crooner has left us.

Kathryn, Bing's widow, and his children, Harry Jr., the newly married Mary Frances and Nathaniel, help keep their Dad's memory alive. As if we could ever forget him.

For the records, the films shewn were:

April 15th:	THE ROAD TO MOROCCO	(1942)
April 22nd:	RHYTHM ON THE RIVER	(1940)
April 29th:	GOING MY WAY	(1940)
May 6th:	BIRTH OF THE BLUES	(1941)
May 13th:	TWO FOR TONIGHT	(1935)
May 27th:	EAST SIDE OF HEAVEN	(1938)
June 3rd:	WELCOME STRANGER	(1947)
June 10th:	A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT	(1949)

That was the 'season' and happily it was followed by a bonus in the showing of A COUNTRY GIRL on the evening of June 15th

Although as we've remarked, many members have their own preferences in what should have been included, it cannot be denied that the list was a fair cross-section of Bing's screen efforts and they spanned many years. It will be noted that only one of the legendary ROAD films was included and this may have been, of course, because these films have received fair showing over the years. And much has, rightly, been made of Bing's tremendous partnership with Bob Hope - inevitably, perhaps and certainly deserving. But the thought occurred not once but many times that the partnership of Bing with that fine Irish actor Barry Fitzgerald was also a truly delightful one, full of humour and whimsical charm. One can well understand, also, that Barry was a trifle unlucky not to get an Oscar also for his wonderful portrayal in GOING MY WAY, not to mention his characterisation of the irascible doctor in WELCOME STRANGER. In fact, I found myself enjoying that film as much as any. It is fitting that many members took the trouble to write to the BBC thanking them for presenting these films.

Members may have caught one of our chaps, ROY OUGH of Plymouth on the ITV-show CELEBRITY'S SQUARES on June 23rd during which he cleverly inveigled an enquiry from Bob Monkhouse about the ICC by sporting his Crosby tie. Nice work!

KEN BROWN of Pinner, Midd'x wrote enthusiastically of a visit to the States (lucky for some!): I visited San Francisco and it certainly is a beautiful city - I can see why he preferred it to Los Angeles. In the latter city I saw the famous Cocoanut Grove - so famous for its Bing connection but unfortunately time did not permit a visit to the Holy Cross Cemetery. But I came back with an armful of Bing records. The scenery and climate are marvellous and the people so friendly!

BBC-Wales, though mainly it takes the normal BBC-1 programme for some reason didn't present the Bing films! Many members wrote commiserating with me and other Welsh members. But the truth is that BBC West of England is also easily obtainable in the Principality and that DID carry the films. As a matter of fact, most Welsh people turn to West of England, especially when Welsh-language programmes are shewn in Wales. Plaid Cymru and the Welsh-language assocation will hang me!

DAVID WARD, Lincoln, obtained a copy of CALL ME LUCKY from The Bargain Book Centre, 1 New House, Bridlesmith Estate, Nottingham, though it took nine months. He says the BBC (NOT the BBC!) have branches in a lot of other towns.

JEAN PAUL FREREAULT reports that the TV and radio situation as regards Bing is very quiet in Canada - but that the record more happily carry a fair stock of his records.

prev page: note "record SHOPS" in Canada...

THE PALLADIUM PLAQUE - AND OTHER THINGS

... and people...

The management of the London Palladium did finally, as indicated earlier, decided to install a plaque to Bing's memory in its foyer. One gets the impression, however, that they did (to use the current idiom) keep a rather low profile on the matter! Little publicity was afforded, or accorded, it outside the London papers. Perhaps because they hurriedly made up their minds to take advantage of Bob Hope's appearance at the theatre they seemed quite tardy in the arrangements with the result that few people attended. I received an invitation on 26th March (in hospital of course) for the day, 29th! But among those attending, ICC was well represented. I managed somehow to get my invitation to TREVOR WAGSTAFFE of Hornchurch, Essex, and I knew that an invitation would go to MRS. RENEE CHESTER of Hanwell, London. Both of these members, amongst all the others, worked prodigiously for this plaque and well deserved to be present. It is understood Leslie Gaylor just managed it, too, in a mad rush from the Isle of Wight; and Frank Murphy, too, we understand, made it from the North East.

"There he is, the Old Groaner," said Bob as he unveiled the plaque - and this oddly enough, was a 'mock-up' as the genuine article was not yet ready. However, it is a good likeness - to coin a phrase - and one all should feel pleased about. Renee Chester additionally has a unique set of colour pictures of the affair, and she must be especially proud of the ones she has with that other world entertainer, Bob Hope. Trevor Wagstaffe has supplied us with a lovely set of pictures too, and we will endeavour to reproduce some of them in a subsequent, less hurried, issue. We are not suggesting, by the way, that the ICC was SOLELY responsible for this pleasant event. And we have heard from the sculptor of the plaque who wonders if members will be interested in a medallion replica of the plaque? He tells us that in silver the cost would be around £25, and in bronze, around £6. The address is;

MR. PHILIP NATHAN, FRBS
OLD POUND COTTAGE, ALFOLD,
NR. CRANLEIGH, SURREY, GU6 8HN

I imagine Mr. Nathan will gauge from the response whether or not to go ahedd. I have not seen a Bing medallion, but a sample of another image in bronze is most impressive, and beautifully boxed. We are aware that another medallion has preceded this project but anyone interested should contact Mr. Nathan.

* * *

Perhaps it wasn't surprising that some of our more artistic members decided to try their hand at a Bing portrait! And oddly enough, many of them selected the picture of Bing as seen on the SEASONS album! Easily the best of those submitted to us was the one by the wife of our Spanish friend, MRS. or should I say Senora Carlos Ubach, of Sabadell, Barcelona, Spain. An excellent, highly detailed and lifelike effort. Congratulations.

We have also received from various sources pictures of Bing's grave; at the moment it is the simplest unadorned stone possible. A white-edge dark granite seeming rectangle, flat to the ground, with the briefest of inscriptions: BELOVED BY ALL. HARRY LILLIS BING CROSBY 1904 - 1977. The birth-date error is thus perpetuated! There is a cross to complete

the inscription. The tablet could not be simpler or plainer. But what could be more eloquent - BELOVED BY ALL? Delightful, even inspired, in its simplicity. JAS. DINEEN of Glasgow also has a lovely set of these grave pictures - as well as a fine tape from Bing's butler, ALAN FISHER, describing the immediate happenings after Bing's death and giving the complete lie to those ill-conceived magazine and newspaper articles some publications saw fit to print.

BERT MORTON, of Brewood, Staffs and another long-time member was also in the States last December. Bert took the opportunity to visit the Crosby office in Los Angeles where he was most cordially received by Nancy Briggs and Mozelle Seger who spent an hour or so showing Bert around and the interesting objects they have there. Bert also took time out to pay his respects to Bing at the Holy Cross Cemetery and he too has supplied us with a splendid set of photographs not only of the grave but also of the really beautiful surroundings of this lovely cemetery -if any cemeteries ARE lovely. So, one way and another all members could be supplied with these pictures if they are sufficiently interested. And if Frank Murphy's Photo Club hasn't the project in hand. Perhaps you'll let us know - cost would be moderate I feel, to cover expenses and postage. And so we come to -

LESLIE GAYLOR the trojan of the Isle of Wight. Les has all kinds of background information regarding further Bing/Buddy/ Pete/Ken issues but we would prefer to let them get a little more concrete before divulging them here. Here now, however, Les shows he is far from the only Bing admirer on the Isle and tells a delightful story of a 'Crosby' retirement. Les writes -

A few days before last Christmas one of our members here on the Isle of Wight retired from his employment with the British Hovercraft Corporation. His name is STEVE BILLINGTON and you will know that with his wife, he is a keen Bing fan and member of the Circle. I was hurriedly approached by one of his closest associates who had the idea to present Steve with an enlarged copy of that lovely Bing 'silhouette motif' with which we have all become so familiar. I was able to supply a suitable 'model' and this was submitted to the chief artist of the Corporation to copy. I was also asked if I could let him have a photo of Bing. The artist copied the motif in a much larger size and in one-eighth gold-leaf and made it a most accurate enlargement. It was then mounted on a large folding card which contained the photograph of Bing. It really made a most impressive souvenir for Steve and his wife Margaret.

It was presented to Steve on the day of his retirement and is, I understand, much admired by visitors to the Billington's home. I was delighted to be part of this lovely surprise for them and I'm sure all ICC members will wish them well.

Editor: Leslie modestly omits to mention that he too weighed in on the presentation with a double LP to Steve....But Leslie continues:

Ken Barnes has been on a trip to the States and one of his missions was to endeavour to make arrangements on behalf of BBC-TV for a 90-minute programme on Bing with Basil Grillo. If all works out well things will move quickly for it is planned to screen the programme this coming Christmas. BBC will fly to the States to film-interview certain people, the necessary camera crews. Also at Christmas there is to be a boxed set of further CBS Buddy Cole recordings and these will have new Pete Moore arrangements added. Further, some light musical arrangements have been done by Pete and Ken as background to the poems Bing recorded at the request of Noel Mould and these will undoubtedly enhance Bing's

fine readings. They will have an impact on members, I am sure, and will form another lasting tribute to the greatness of Bing.

And you may like to know that Ken Barnes warmly commends those who originally recorded the Bing-Buddy Cole tapes in the 'Fifties - they were beautifully recorded - as many of us know - but Ken reveals that the manner in which they were first recorded has considerably assisted the re-engineering that has been undertaken.

I was asked recently what is my personal opinion as to Bing's greatest ever recording session. What a question! And impossible task, I thought to myself. I could easily plump for the ballads session on September 12, 1977 for the SEASONS album when Bing recorded SEPTEMBER SONG, JUNE IN JANUARY, AUTUMN IN NEW YORK and YESTERDAY WHEN I WAS YOUNG.

> When Bing's superb rendering of the verse of SEPTEMBER SONG came over the speakers we were truly spellbound and Sid Margo, the orchestral contractor, summed it up for millions of people when he turned to us and simply said: 'There's only one...' Even Kathryn said to me on the last night of the London Palladium on October 8, 1977 when I told her of Bing's great form on the SEASONS sessions: 'Do you know Leslie, as he's getting older so he's getting better."

But, I go along with Bing's own personal view that he was at his "all time best" - modestly given - during 1933 to early 1935. A prominent American recording industry spokesman once said that the Bing voice at the time just mentioned was better than half a dozen other currently top singers "all rolled into one".

> SO, I WOULD THEREFORE GO FOR THE SESSION OF JUNE 9, 1933, WHEN BING RECORDED 'MOONSTRUCK', 'MY LOVE', 'I'VE GOT TO PASS YOUR HOUSE' and the unissued version of 'LEARN TO CROON'.

Editor: What a fascinating thought! Bing's greatest session....we've long ago abandoned trying to name his greatest record as an impossible task. Why not have a go at his greatest session? Leslie has come out firmly. Personally, I too would go along with Bing's time....I don't think I've ever really concealed that prefence while stoutly maintaining that Bing was always Bing, always great (we'll ignore a couple of off-days in 50-odd years!) and always instantly identifiable, be it 1929 or 1977.... One needs to study the discographies, of course, to arrive at a best session...

Leslie mentioned too that Ken and Pete had been in the States again. Our distinguished US member, MR. JUSTICE FRANCIS X. SMITH of the New York Supreme Court who keeps in cordial touch with us, delightedly informed us he had made contact with Pete for a luncheon appointment and was greatly looking forward to it.

But, think about the best-ever recording session Bing undertook - and tell us your results!

Despite quite intensive checking it sometimes happen that an issue gets out with a blank page. There is no need to put up with this - but let us know quickly before 'spares' are disposed of...

THE ROAD TO TACOMA & SPOKANE

HERB BOOTMAN (3714 Poe Str., San Diego, Calif. 92107, USA), who was a guest speaker, reports for us on the great events held last May by THE BING CROSBY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, see last issue. These events seem to have put the Society on the map and while at present we can only applaud from afar, plans are afoot for British members to visit the States next year, see below. HERB writes:

Have you ever taken a complicated trip and had almost everything go right? I did, in spite of a few tense moments on the road to Tacoma and Spokane. The event in Tacoma has to go down as one of the most significant in the annals of Crosbyana in the USA, and the pilgrimage to Spokane was most timely and poignant.

The Tacoma event was nominally a joint gathering of the Bing Crosby Historical Society and Club Crosby but let credit fall where it is due - it was KEN TWISS and his loyal hardworking crew who carried the ball on this affair and make it click, all the way down to the nitty details. It just couldn't have been better. Pardon while I skim the initial happenings because it reflects the thought and care our hosts put into this conclave. On the Friday night before the big day - May 5th - and after a 'blurry' dinner at the Doric Motor Inn, we repaired to a delightful little movie theater and watched showings of several Mack Sennett shorts (courtesy of Al Sutton) and a flawless copy of WE'RE NOT DRESSING. There were refreshments featuring a special 'Crosby Cake'. It was the ideal chance for us Southerners to become acquainted with our Washington brethren. I hope we Californians will have a chance to return the hospitality.

The momentous day arrived. At this point let me stress the double coup that KEN TWISS pulled off by attractiving two men who loom large in Crosbyana. They addressed in a most generous and easygoing manner a gathering of about 120 attendees from across the (American) nation. First, AL RINKER, of Beverly Hills who brought focus on a number of sidelights of his life with Bing from childhood to the Cocoanut Grove, bouncy and sharp as a tack. Next, a man whose importance is hard to overstate in Crosbyana: JOHN SALISBURY, of Radio KXL Portland, Oregon - biographer, documentarian, personal friend and lexicographer of our hero. It will be some time before we fully realise how indebted we are to him for the two monumental radio series on KXL. Our hobby has been enriched by THE CROSBY YEARS and FIFTY FABULOUS YEARS, also that unforgettable colloquy between him and MEN BARNES in London the day after Bing died. John carried the ball ably on both afternoon and evening sessions. He was the core of the affair and presented an interesting cassette interview with Donald O'Connor, an invitee sending regrets. There were greetings from others regretting, including Phil Harris and Kathryn Crosby.

Getting back to AL RINKER, who fielded questions from the audience very well - it was fascinating how clearly he recalled the very first recording session (I'VE GOT THE GIRL with Don Clark and Orchestra in a vacant warehouse) Bing had been repeatedly questioned on this and his memory was always fuzzy. After almost 2 hours of this post-banquet chit-chat, the program moved on to a beautiful showing of GOING HOLLYWOOD. The programme said 11.00 finis, but really it was 1.00 am when we got thro'. Three men worked long and hard especially in putting this affair together: KEN TWISS, says little but sure works. Bill Osborn, that reprobate Seattleite, our MC with the wide smile and galaxy of punch lines and, another native of Seattle, GEORGE ULRICH. If we can recruit a few more young men like this our future will be bright. In his mid-20's, an expert projectionist, handsome, personable....

(Cont over

THE ROAD TO SPOKANE.... I look back and marvel at the beauty and exquisite timing of that morning and part afternoon of May 9th spent in the Crosby Library of Gonzaga University. Two top curators, Jesuit Padres C. Carroll and A. Dussault, couldn't have been more gracious and obliging. As US universities go Gonzaga isn't big, study body 3000. It was conceived in the 1890's and has some handsome, well-spaced, buildings. The Crosby Library was built in 1967 but looks newer; it sits behind the front row of older buildings and is prominently marked. Nothing flasy, it is an honest-to-goodness functioning college library, full of earnest students cramming for exam week. On an alternately sunny-rainy day I noted some barefoot students toiling away in the august reading rooms.

I was led upstairs and turned loose in the normally locked Crosby Room. It is roughly 80' by 35' with one 80' side facing north and completely glassed. A huge conference table dominates the center · d the walls are lined with gold records, trophies, awards, tributes, certificates, a gallery of photographs in panel rack arrangement, locked cabinets of memorabilia, etc. Mention was made of cabinets full of Bing artifacts in other parts of the building - I could be there yet but I grew uneasy, taking the time of these important men.

After a sumptuous lunch in the University's faculty cafeteria they had yet another happy surprise for us. Father Dussault drove us into downtown Spokane and led us to an upstairs artists studio and there, along with the proud sculptress, stood Bing - larger than life. She assured me it was - being 1¼ times life. It was eerie - even the eyes were Bing, all in grey clay. This is NOT the miniature now on sale at $1200 but a brand new work taking over 8 months to complete and commissioned by Gonzaga. I understand the statue will be skillfully sawn into five pieces, shipped east, reassembled, have a wax mould made, and will finally be cast into an heroic bronze figures. This will stand in front of the Library. Gonzaga for certain is not reticent about encouraging interest in Bing's roots.

Lastly, the Crosby home where Bing spent his years before going south to conquer. Incredibly, it is only one block from the campus. Father Dussault told me that Bing spent 17 years at Gonzaga (elementary, high, college). He should know; he was born the same year as Bing and was a classmate. The house itself is a solid well-kept good-looking frame; hard to believe it dates from the beginning of this century. As to ownership, it is privately owned but negotiations are at a delicate state for its purchase by Gonzaga.

Postscript musings - On our motor approach to Tacoma from the south we went through the Tumwater-Olympia area and there, sure enough, a few blocks from the Olympia Brewery was the enshrined "Crosby House", a lovely old home owned by Bing's paternal grandfather Nathaniel back in the 1870's. A bronze plaque designates it as 'A Registered State Historical Place' which was acquired and is maintained by the State of Washington. In the 1890's through the turn of the century, Bing's father was a restless man. He occupied at least four different homes in a limited area. Everett was born here. Ted there, etc. Bing's birthplace is an ordinary, well-kept structure occupied by the owners, across the street from St. Patrick's Church.

The goal of BCHS in acquiring this house is lofty. One wonders what chance an accumulation of small private donations has in a bounding real estate market. Ken Twiss realises this and that the principal thrust of effort must be directed at involving state or local agencies - even the Catholic church.

Editor: So, Herb summarises for us the programme of the days in May when so much happened. KEN TWISS would indeed appreciate donations from us

in Britain and Europe. Bank manager tells us there may be difficulties in sending large sums of sterling out of the country so it would be better for members desirous of aiding this very worthwhile organisation by sending donations direct: THE BING CROSBY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, PO BOX 8013, Tacoma, Washington 98408, USA. mention, of course, the ICC. The society obviously needs money for its laudable ambitions towards a permanent memorial to Bing.

The Newsletter of the Society also mentions the possibility of British admirers attending their Tacoma events next May and towards this end FRANK MURPHY, 32 Farndale Avenue, Wallsend, Tyne & Wear, NE28 7NE has asked us to print the following:

> I have been asked by KEN TWISS to make initial enquiries regarding a charter flight to the United States from the UK for fans interested in attending the 2nd Birthday Anniversary Tribute to Bing to be held in Tacoma on May 3rd, 1980. The commitment from this end is for our party to arrange the charter to the USA and for a 22-day tour to be then arranged by the Americans which, it is envisaged, will take in all the Crosby spots of interest - and others - making it the trip of a lifetime for Crosby admirers, their families and friends. A similar project is being arranged in Australia so that it is hoped there will be a considerable uniting of Bing fans next May 3rd.
>
> I have provisionally given Callers Pegas in Newcastle instructions to get us a price for a 200/250 possible contingent and as soon as the breakdown charges are available I will pass them on to interested parties. IF YOU WANT TO BE KEPT POSTED ON THIS SEND ME A STAMPED, ADDRESSED ENVELOPE (no letter at this stage) MARKED "CHARTER" IN THE TOP LEFT HAND CORNER. In due course I will let you have the details.

Mr. Justice Francis X. Smith, already mentioned, has sent us the most sensible, non-snide, non-schmaltz article we have seen for a long while that appeared in an American paper. It concerns the Crosby family and Kathryn's forthcoming book which, it is now believed, will be a best-seller. Alas, we cannot possibly extend this issue any further, but the article will appear in the next issue of BING.

One of our younger members, KEITH RICHMOND, of Pulborough, West Sussex, wrote to us last autumn saying he was undertaking a tour of Mid-Wales - and could he drop in an see us? By all means...but he turned up on one of the wildest nights of the winter, with the wind howling and the rain positively slashing down.....on a push-bike! So, some youngsters do NOT spurn the spartan life. Divested of his oilskins we had a most entertaining evening and learned, amongst other things, that young Keith is fluent in Russian! We invited him to stay on such a wild night but no, he had booked in somewhere in the town and off he went into the wind and rain.... The next time we heard from Keith (I was worried for ages as to how he got across the Severn Bridge next day, tho' the weather did improve a shade) - was from GIBRALTAR. There, it seems, he had been on army reserve training! Said he'd enjoyed it to an extent, but was glad it was only a fortnight. A little bit of news for Keith. I spent 3 years on the Rock, 1958-61 and enjoyed virtually every minute of it. But, I wasn't a soldier....remember, though, that I picked up HOME ON THE RANGE and IN A LITTLE SPANISH TOWN whilst there.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO REMIT SUBSCRIPTIONS IF DUE: FAILURE TO DO SO COULD SERIOUSLY PREJUDICE THE FUTURE OF THE ICC and BING.